

Long Journeys to a Middle Ground: Indians, Catholics, and the Origins of a New Deal in Montana and Idaho, 1855-1945

Aaron David Hyams
Marquette University

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INDIANS, CATHOLICS, AND THE
ORIGINS OF A NEW DEAL IN
MONTANA AND IDAHO,
1855-1945

by

Aaron D. Hyams, B.A., M.A.

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ABSTRACT
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This study focuses on the experiences of individuals and families, on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce reservations of Montana and Idaho, who converted to Catholicism, adapted to agricultural living, accepted American education, and otherwise sought to find their places in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, this project follows local Catholic leaders from the missions and surrounding parishes who struggled with their contradictory roles as shepherds of their native flocks and agents of colonialism. I argue that Indians and Catholics on the reservations carved out often overlapping communities and identities as they negotiated the changes introduced by the allotment of the reservations. Both the Blackfeet and Flathead reservations witnessed a growth of Catholic communities that integrated Indians, mixed-ancestry individuals, and whites into a network of cultural, political, and economic relationships. Catholicism provided a common cultural frame for “full bloods,” “mixed bloods,” whites, and Latin Americans, to interact within. These networks provided business contacts as well as material support for people in need of it. On the Nez Perce reservation, there emerged a network of Catholic whites and Nez Perces who built a shared history with one another based on their mutual mistreatment at the hands of the federal government and the Office of Indian Affairs. Together, Catholics on the Nez Perce reservation constructed a memory of an overtly hostile Indian Agency that had precipitated the Nez Perce War and persecuted Catholics, as well. As a result, these heterogeneous communities quickly and emphatically embraced the Indian Reorganization Act, building new tribal institutions based on principles of coexistence and a recognition of the relationships that mutually tied both native peoples and non-natives to Indian Country.

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Aaron D. Hyams, B.A., M.A.

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Introduction and Review of Sources

This study focuses on the experiences of individuals and families, on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce reservations of Montana and Idaho, who converted to Catholicism, adapted to agricultural living, accepted American education, and otherwise sought to find their place in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, this project follows local Catholic leaders from the missions and surrounding parishes who struggled with their contradictory roles as shepherds of their native flocks and as agents of colonialism. I argue that Indians and Catholics on the reservations carved out often overlapping communities and identities as they negotiated the changes introduced by the allotment of reservations. Both the Blackfeet and Flathead reservations witnessed a growth of Catholic communities that integrated Indians, mixed-ancestry individuals, and whites into a network of cultural, political, and economic relationships. Catholicism provided a common cultural frame for “full bloods,” “mixed bloods,” whites, and Hispanics, to interact within. These networks provided business contacts as well as material support for people in need of it. On the Nez Perce reservation, there emerged a network of Catholic whites and Nez Perces who built a shared history with one another based on their mutual mistreatment at the hands of the federal government and the Office of Indian Affairs. Together, Catholics on the Nez Perce reservation constructed a memory of an overtly hostile Indian Agency that precipitated the Nez Perce War and persecuted Catholics as well. As a result, these heterogeneous communities quickly and emphatically embraced the Indian Reorganization Act, building new tribal institutions based on principles of coexistence and a recognition of the relationships that mutually tied both native and non-native peoples to Indian Country.

Between the middle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the mountainous stretches of Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle were completely transformed. In the centuries prior to American settlement, Native Peoples carved out their own societies in the mountains, valleys, and foothills. As Americans arrived, they confined Native Peoples to reservations. In the late nineteenth century, the federal government commenced a massive effort to assimilate Indians, in the region and across the country, by allotting them private lands and insisting they take up agriculture. By the late 1920s, this program had shown itself to be a complete disaster. Not only had it failed to encourage economic independence for Native Peoples, it had also failed in its goals to assimilate them. At the same time, though, the reservations emerged as microcosms of the region's complexity, and the movement of peoples and cultures that shaped its history.

Allotment unfolded in the Northwest in an altogether different manner than in the Midwest, Great Plains, or Southwest. Accounting for the difference, first, and most practically, was the simple fact that intensive settlement and sustained contact between Indians and whites came far later to the mountainous region of the Northwest than it did to other regions. Much of the strife, death, and warfare that wracked the Midwest with near constancy from the turn of the nineteenth century, the Southwest following the Mexican-American War, and the Great Plains after the Civil War, arrived to the region later. Furthermore, the region did not see its demography significantly changed by the Indian removals and mass exodus of Native Peoples from the eastern United States in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s. As is covered in the first three chapters, the confinement of the Blackfeet, Nez Percés, and Confederated Salish and Kootenais to their reservations was

not even completed until 1891, once the Dawes Act was already in place, and barely more than a decade before allotment arrived to the region.

Secondly, the Northwest possessed a deep Jesuit and Catholic history that began prior to the intensive settlement of the region. As covered in chapter one, Catholic origins in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle extended back into the 1830s, with a number of mysterious delegations sent by the Salish people of Western Montana to St. Louis, Missouri, requesting that “black robes” be sent west. Acting on this as their prerogative and claim to the region, Jesuits arrived in the early 1840s. Apart from the sporadic visits of traders, missionaries were among the first non-Indians encountered by Blackfeet, Nez Perces, Flatheads, and Kootenais in the generation since the Corps of Discovery passed through the region. Thus, the process of adaptation and cultural exchange between people from disparate civilizations was already well underway before the United States confined Native Peoples to reservations and carved up the region into territories and states.

The importance of early contact with missionaries, which is covered in chapter three, cannot be understated. The missions established on and near the three reservations between 1854 and 1886 were valuable refuges that assisted Native Peoples in coping with the realities of a changing world. Even before the agricultural extension programs and training efforts that defined allotment came into existence, the three reservations were - of their own accord - shifting away from older subsistence strategies and toward agriculture. A near-complete agricultural revolution may have even come about independently without allotment, which both accelerated the pace of change and caused severe dislocations.

As Montana and Idaho formally entered the union (in 1889 and 1890), and as allotment commenced between 1895 and 1911, the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations stood at a “crossroads of civilizations.” The region was already in flux, adjusting to the collision of American and Native cultures, geographies, and institutions in the mid-nineteenth century. They developed as multi-ethnic, and multicultural, institutions with parallel spheres of tribal, spiritual, and civic authority. This forms the basis of chapter four. Thus, healthy community function required coordination. Federal acculturation programs required the compliance of influential tribal leaders and missionaries to work, and often failed when assimilation efforts lacked this support.

Furthermore, allotment brought thousands of newcomers onto the reservations, in the form of migrants and settlers of both Indian and non-Indian backgrounds. This process, which is the focus of chapter five, forced a quick and sudden adjustment on the part of the Blackfeet, Nez Percés, and Confederated Salish and Kootenais. Here, the Catholic Church played an important role by integrating people of vastly different backgrounds under a Catholic identity. At the same time the emerging agricultural economies in the region tied together the interests of Indians and non-Indians alike.

Of course, allotment produced a variety of experiences. And as its course wore on into the 1920s many people found themselves pushed into poverty and desperation. In this way, allotment in the Northwest bore striking similarities to larger national trends. This forms the emphasis of the sixth chapter, which highlights how a disintegrating infrastructure and shrinking means of subsistence forced many people into extreme and even criminal enterprises as a means of survival. At the same time, however, this

situation demonstrated the limits of government authority and the potential for native agency and adaptation.

Such dislocations brought the Indian New Deal into the Northwest in the mid-1930s with great anticipation. The coming of the Indian New Deal, furthermore, reflected and institutionalized the changes taking place within the remnants of the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Flathead Reservations throughout the course of allotment. By the 1930s, the three communities were eager for stability. As allotment came to a close, it did so with strong Indian Catholic communities supporting their missions, and with the tribes more generally seeking to stabilize and expand their economic relationships with non-Indians on and around the reservations.

Thus the 1930s opened an awe-inspiring window into the new terrain upon which the Blackfeet, Nez Percés, Confederated Salish and Kootenais, and Euroamericans found themselves. Catholics had integrated the three nations as the eldest members of dioceses that spanned Idaho and Western Montana. Furthermore, Indian country in the Northwest evolved into a space that bound together both Indians and non-Indians with economic and cultural ties. The end result of assimilation was a synthesis of Indian, American, and Catholic impulses and goals, rather than a clear ascendancy of any of the individual institutions.

Of course, invoking Richard White's "Middle Ground," itself, opens certain historiographical doors and invites criticism. This project, naturally, does not concern the *Pay D'en Haut*, nor is it directly engaging with exchanges, relationships, and intimacies that shaped contact experiences between Europeans and Native Peoples in the Atlantic World. Instead, much of the conceptualization of this project drew influence from a

defense and reconceptualization of his “Middle Ground” that White published in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 2006. In the article, White asserted two essential points. First, he stated that a middle ground – as a process – was not unique to French Canada, but replicable – to one degree or another – in other places and spaces. Second, White argued that “[*The Middle Ground*] assumes that people are not necessarily stupid, simple, or parochial; contact situations created not only violence... but also new cultural formations and understandings.”¹

Both of these insights quickly found their resonance in a story about the foundations and course of early reservation life in Western Montana and Idaho. Confinement and allotment on the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot Reservations is a tale containing equal measures of violence and tragedy mixed with invention and growth. The little towns, homesteads, farms, and ranches that cropped up in Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot Countries formed through collaboration and comprise. Each, in a way, stood as a self-contained comprise, a middle ground. The reality of the reservations under allotment was their emergence as heterogeneous and culturally mixed institutions. Fields worked by Native Peoples, whites, and Latin Americans, Catholic churches with multilingual and multicultural parishes, and towns whose character was defined by the lives of the numerous different peoples and cultures brought together by different roads.

The history of the Dawes Act is already well tread territory. Much of the metanarrative is firmly established, with mountains of evidence that undergird it. Allotment was terrifyingly damaging to native lands. From an initial, nationwide, land base of 113 million acres in 1887, allotment whittled tribal lands to a meager 47 million

¹ Richard White, “Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006), 13.

acres by its end in 1934. During this time, the Flathead Reservation turned to a checkerboard of tribal lands and property held by non-Indians. The Blackfeet Reservation saw its entire western section disembodied from its remainder. The Lapwai Agency, where Nez Perces, lived, narrowed down to little more than the properties surrounding the agency plants, schools, and sanatorium.

Loss and economic and cultural degradation form the broad basis of this historiography. In this way, the Dawes Act is most often interpreted as a grand disaster. It was designed in era of reform, and meant to uplift Indian peoples into economic independence and prepare them for citizenship in the United States. Despite these noble intentions, however, its implementation saw allotment primarily used as a lever to dislodge property from tribal land bases and make it available to an American public that demanded access. Such a sentiment was perfectly demonstrated by men like Montana representative Frank Worden, who in 1899 published an editorial in the *Helena Independent* demanding that the lands of the Flathead Reservation be opened to whites, since it was “of no use to the Indians.”²

Indian resistance to this destruction is also a growing feature of the history of the Dawes Act. Nationwide, many if not most tribal leaders greeted the news of the Dawes Act with skepticism. For many, the Dawes Act appeared as just another in a line of empty and half-hearted promises made by a congress and a federal Indian bureau that had done little if anything to demonstrate their worthiness of Native Peoples’ trust. While allotment succeeded in withering reservations, it often fell far short of its goals for acculturation. This is because Indian peoples often brought their own agendas to allotment, and reacted within the confines of the policy in often unexpected and unanticipated ways.

² Frank Worden, “Of No Use to the Indians,” *Helena Independent* (January 25, 1899), 5.

This project both confirms and modifies the existing literature. Even setting aside the lands lost by the Blackfeet, Nez Perces, and Salish and Kootenais through their treaty negotiations in 1855, the course of confinement and allotment for them as a group was staggering. The original Blackfeet Reservation covered almost all of modern Montana north of the Missouri River. Further negotiations in 1885 and 1896 carved the original reservation into three smaller agencies, and then severed the entire western half of the reservation for what is now Glacier Park. The first Nez Perce Reservation, which straddled Oregon and Idaho, was reduced to a third of its original size by a new treaty in 1863 that also precipitated a war that splintered the Nez Perces and sent many of their number into permanent exile. The original Flathead Reservation included the Bitterroot Valley. Salish removal from the Bitterroot was completed by 1891.

The Blackfeet, Nez Perces, and Salish and Kootenais also resisted allotment, and retained their agency even under the pressures of acculturation. The Nez Perces maintained themselves and some of their independence through leases, allowing them to resist government agricultural programs. Many members of the Blackfeet and Flathead reservations embraced agriculture and ranching, and even found success in these pursuits. Others on the two reservations acquiesced to government demands on matters of education to maintain control over issues of law enforcement and governance.

At the same time, this project offers a number of amendments. First it is designed to stitch the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce reservations together into a regional experience. The ties between the places and people in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle run deep. Even before the treaties, the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Salish-speaking peoples had long cultural and economic ties. The region and reservations,

furthermore, all formed under the same treaty system, negotiated by Isaac Stevens. Additionally, the reservations shared common administrators and other government officials. Finally a Jesuit mission effort also bound the reservations together. Jesuits first established themselves among the Salish in the 1840s, and from there extended their efforts to include the Blackfeet and Nez Perces.

Incorporating missionaries more generally, and analyzing their roles alongside that of government agents and the tribes proves a further addition to an analysis of allotment and modernization in the region. Missionaries are an omnipresent but overlooked feature of the history of allotment and acculturation. Christianization is universally recognized as a core component of the effort to detribalize native peoples. Yet, the actual roles played by missionaries, and particularly Catholics, are often relegated to the background in studies of allotment. Histories of Catholics and Indians, conversely, which stress themes of exchange and adaptation, pay little attention to how Catholics related to the Indian Service. In truth, Catholic reservation infrastructure and that of the Indian agencies were deeply interrelated. Catholics found ways to dip into federal monies and access federal resources, without losing their own motivations and goals, which - at times - ran counter to federal policies.

Of concern to this project, too, are matters of Indian agency and the impact of the Indian New Deal after the era of allotment. The Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce reservations clearly demonstrate that assimilation and adaptation were as great a form of agency as resistance. The drive to acculturate the peoples of the three reservations was not a simple, top-down transference of new influences. Rather, the agency of individual Indians and native institutions were as important to the changes taking place in Indian

Country as were any government programs or missionary efforts. On a broad scale, the entirety of the period in question, from the formation of the reservations to the inauguration of the Indian New Deal, was a transformative process from which the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nations emerged. From the variety of bands and kin groups that were concentrated together on the reservations conjoined new tribal identities, based on newly emerging tribal institutions and governments.

Thus, as debate in Washington, D.C., shifted with the appointment of John Collier, the course of events on the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Flathead Reservations was already bringing the three communities toward an order that Indian reorganization sought to achieve. Collier's attempt to slow and stop the pace of allotment exerted relatively little impact on these reservations. Furthermore, evidence shows that the communities, were - by their own volition - regaining equilibrium and adjusting to allotment. Both the expansion of the leasing economy on all of the reservations and increased activity from tribal business councils demonstrated that. Once reorganization commenced, little of the day-to-day business of the reservations changed. The three tribes maintained their relationships - both cultural and economic - with the non-Indians who had come into Indian Country, and demonstrated their willingness to support a financially ailing Catholic Church, of which many of them were members.

The first chapter places the entirety of the study into the perspective of *longue duree* history. It seeks to root the patterns of cultural change and adaptation during allotment into the overarching patterns of Native American history. Chapters two and three sketch out the origins of the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations, and

line out the confinement of native peoples, the establishment of the Indian agencies, and the growth of the regional Catholic presence. The middle chapters cut to the heart of the changes taking place during the allotment era. Chapter four focuses on the adaptations made by Indians and Catholics to the implementation of allotment. Chapter five brings in the numerous settlers and migrants who found their way onto the reservations during allotment, and covers their integration into the extant native communities. Chapter six lays out the economic dislocations and social problems unleashed by allotment and assesses the adjustment of the reservation communities to these issues. The final chapter highlights the coming of the Indian New Deal, and assesses how it came to be implemented by the three tribes.

The dynamic changes taking place in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, convey a unique regional history. While land loss and poverty marked the assimilation experiences for Blackfeet, Nez Perces, and Salish and Kootenais, much like it did all over the United States, the era was also defined by a remarkable adjustment to coexistence for people of widely different cultures and worldviews. The Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce reservations became astonishingly multicultural institutions. They were places where the worlds of Indians and Americans, and Catholics and immigrants overlapped and interconnected. They became, in fact, a “middle ground,” representative of all of the forces that shaped them. In this, we can differentiate the histories of these three reservations and this region from the broader national history of allotment and acculturation. This, albeit regional, perspective, furthermore, calls to question assumptions about the assault on Indianness by allotment and the boarding schools, as well as assumptions about Indian peoples’ declining agency in the modern period.

In dealing with themes of cultural interaction and “civilizing” more generally, the work of Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., played a critical role. Prucha’s masterful, and even-handed, treatment and assessment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs greatly influenced this project. Examining the era of allotment, and the policies of assimilation that accompanied it, Prucha delves into the minds of reformers, and argues for the benevolence of their intentions. The men and women who designed late-nineteenth century Indian reforms – such as Henry Laurens Dawes and Helen Hunt Jackson – existed at the forefront of progressive American political thought in the late-nineteenth century. They were moved and deeply troubled by the conduct of the Peace Policy and Removal eras, and wanted, desperately, to make amends for the wrongs of the past.³ Echoing these sentiments is the important work of Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, which draws out further the ghastly and often costly consequences of reformers’ misguided benevolence and paternalism.⁴

Even in spite of the horrible, if unintentional, results of assimilation policies, Indians retained agency and the ability to maneuver even within the shrinking means of their material existences. A seminally important work advancing this argument, and further laying an influential backdrop for this study, is Emily Greenwald’s *Reconfiguring the Reservation*. Using the Nez Perces and Jicarillas as examples, Greenwald lays out the ways in which native peoples bent allotment to their own purposes. Specifically, their choices of lands, she argues, were not always made according to agricultural calculations. Rather, people often grouped their allotments together, or spaced them out, in order to protect historically and culturally significant pieces of tribal property from being

³ See, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Also, Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

⁴ Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

alienated into the public domain. Through informal means, native peoples rejected the ideas of private land ownership that the Dawes Act attempted to convey, and instead continued on with their own notions of ownership and usage.⁵

Even at the same time that native peoples' material lives were rapidly changing, so was the substance of their legal relationship with the United States. This study draws on a number of others that point to the ephemeral nature of "Indianness," and the evolution of its definition over time. Deborah Rosen's *American Indians and State Law* argues that the federal government only eventually claimed responsibility for governing Indians from the individual states. With the enactment of the Dawes Act, and the opening of the path to citizenship for Indians, however, states again entered into the conversation, making the legality of Indian identity contentious and ambiguous.⁶ William Unrau's *Mixed Bloods and Tribal Dissolution* more broadly investigates the historical role of "mixed-race" members of American Indian communities, and argues that such individuals emerged as particularly influential leaders because of their ability to "pass" in both native and non-native circles.⁷ Finally, there is the work of Mark Edwin Miller. In *Claiming Tribal Identity*, Miller demonstrates how complex Indian identity became when attached to legal and material concerns. From Miller's point of view, "Indianness" in the twentieth century extended beyond a cultural or ethnic identity to that of a legally regulated political identity. This evolution, furthermore, reflected the highly complex

⁵ Emily Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Percés, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

⁶ Deborah A. Rosen, *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship, 1790-1880* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

⁷ William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

nature of modern Indian Country, wherein both native and non-native peoples shared intrinsic economic and political connections.⁸

Historical debate on the significance and accomplishments of Collier and his Indian New Deal have largely ranged between assessments of the reforms' successes and impact, to the latent paternalism of Collier's ideology, combined with the ongoing paternalistic oversight of the Indian Service during the New Deal era. The standard interpretation of the Indian New Deal remains Graham Taylor's, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism*. Taylor's work was triumphantly critical of earlier histories that largely lauded the liberal achievements of the Indian New Deal, supplanting them with an argument that remains largely intact down to the present. Taylor balanced a sympathy for John Collier with criticism of his policies, arguing that the fundamental weakness of the Indian New Deal laid in Collier's misinterpretation of native cultures and how they functioned. Programs, for example, like the support of handicrafts and tourist business in order to encourage tribal economic development often broadly applied Collier's understanding of southwest native cultures outside of their contexts, and in fact expanded the wage economy among Indian tribes in an effort to curtail them.⁹

Another standard interpretation of the Indian New Deal is Lawrence Kelly's *The Assault on Assimilation*. Kelly strongly argues the influence of Collier's upbringing and early career on the trajectory of the Indian New Deal. The tragic circumstances of Collier's upbringing - he had lost both of his parents due to addiction and mental illness by the age of 16 - and his involvement with settlement houses thoroughly radicalized him

⁸ Mark Edwin Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgement* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

⁹ Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980).

and his ideology. This, coupled with his early experiences in Indian rights activism, made Collier a fierce and ardent critic of assimilation, the boarding school structure, and allotment. Kelly explains much of the Indian New Deal as Collier's personal crusade based on his love for native cultures and his disillusionment with mainstream America.¹⁰

Laurence Hauptman's *The Iroquois and the New Deal* deeply questioned the "anti-assimilationist" bent of Collier's administration. Hauptman examines Iroquois resistance to the Indian Reorganization Act, arguing that the Six Nations long maintained and defended their rights to self-government as far back as the eighteenth century. Thus many among the Six Nations rejected the IRA, and branded Collier a tyrant for trying to force an unwanted system of government and organization upon them. For the Iroquois the Indian New Deal produced the opposite of the desired effect, increasing bureaucratic oversight and control over the Six Nations and their tribal property.¹¹

Hauptman, in addition, demonstrated the extent to which Collier drew on the influence of British colonial administration in his management of the Office of Indian Affairs. Of particular influence on Collier, were the views of British "Liberal Imperialists" who supported indirect rule in their African empire. Here, the strategy was to aid indigenous peoples in the establishment of a "British-styled" government that would have paternalistic oversight from the Colonial Office. In a similar fashion, Collier envisioned the creation of tribal governments, based on a model of state constitutions that would be carefully watched over by the Indian Service.¹²

¹⁰ Lawrence Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

¹¹ Laurence M. Hauptman, *The Iroquois and the New Deal* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

¹² Laurence M. Hauptman, "Africa View: John Collier, the British Colonial Service and American Indian Policy, 1933-1945," *The Historian* 29 (1986), 356-374.

Other historians, too, have questioned the ultimate impact of the Indian New Deal, and whether it truly marked a departure point from previous decades of federal Indian policy. Kenneth Philip argued that precursors of termination, specifically the ending of federal support and treaty promises for tribes that were deemed capable of governing their own affairs, extended back into the Indian Reorganization Act.¹³ Donald Parman's *The Navajos and the New Deal* takes a critical look at the herd reduction program on the Navajo Reservation during the Indian New Deal. In the book Parman demonstrates Collier's capacity for "iron-fisted" inflexibility in dealing with Navajo leaders, as well as his capacity for cultural insensitivity and imperialistic thought.¹⁴ Thomas Biolsi's *Organizing the Lakotas* further examines the promises of the Indian New Deal left unaccomplished in the policies' administration among the Lakota. Biolsi focuses on the Lakotas' mounting frustration both with how slowly power was transferred to their IRA government, but also that the power ultimately given to the Lakota fell far below expectations.¹⁵

More recent scholarship on the Indian New Deal has continued in a similar critical vein. Jennifer McLerran's *A New Deal for Native Art* expands the criticism of the Indian New Deal's "handicrafts" drives designed to support reservation economies. McLerran argues that the program commoditized many items and symbols that had at one point carried considerable cultural and spiritual significance. Furthermore, McLerran suggests, the program was based on American assumptions about native material culture,

¹³ Kenneth R. Philip, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1977). Also, Kenneth R. Philip, "Termination: A Legacy of the Indian New Deal," *Western Historical Quarterly* 14 (1983), 165-180.

¹⁴ Donald Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁵ Thomas Biolsi, *Organizing the Lakota: The Political Economy of the New Deal on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

giving Indian peoples limited agency in the program.¹⁶ Lastly, Jon S. Blackman's *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* examines why the Oklahoma Indians resisted in the Indian Reorganization, finding that the answer laid in their skepticism of the New Deal tribal governments as well as their mistrust of Collier, his methods, and his intentions. Ultimately, the Oklahoma tribes were left out of the Wheeler-Howard Act, but organized separately under similar bill, the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, in 1936. Even by 1950, however, few tribes had individually accepted and organized under the OIWA, and the efforts to recover territory had gained little ground. Blackman argues the OIWA bill was ultimately beneficial, though his evidence suggests a limited positive impact for Oklahoma's reorganization prior to Termination.¹⁷

In addition to the history of the Indian New Deal, this project also necessarily cuts across several other historiographies. Discussing cultural contact, and even cultural imperialism, takes on a role of paramount importance to this study, particularly concerning the role of missionaries in Native American history. With unsettling regularity, historical interpretations of missionaries, and the effort to "civilize" American Indians more generally, tend to gravitate toward extremes. On the one hand, there exists a set of only marginally-useful histories of missionaries that tend to wax from sympathetic and uncritical to entirely hagiographic.¹⁸ A polar opposite train of thought casts the experiences of contact, and the attempts to evangelize and educate native peoples as an act of cultural genocide. In such arguments, the roles of missionaries and other

¹⁶ Jennifer McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art: Indian Arts and Federal Policy, 1933-1943* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

¹⁸ In particular, the life and work of Pierre-Jean De Smet, the Jesuit missionary who pioneered much of the Catholic work among the peoples of the Northwestern United States is as wrapped in folklore as it is in sober analysis. See, George Bishop, *Black Robe and Tomahawk: The Life and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873* (London: Gracewing Publishing, 2003). Also, Robert C. Carriker, *Father Peter John De Smet: Jesuit in the West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

“civilizers” is both quickly and decidedly negative, stressing the intent of missionaries and others to completely stamp out indigenous beliefs, language, and spoken culture.¹⁹

This project attempts to rest itself among the more refreshingly “middle-of-the-road” interpretations of missionaries and cultural imperialism. As far as the roles of missionaries, generally, and Catholics, specifically, are concerned, this study draws considerable influence from the work of James Sandos and Gerald McKevitt. McKevitt’s *Brokers of Culture* places the Jesuit missionaries of the western United States in a global context, stressing the importance of the order’s nineteenth-century ejection from a tumultuous Europe to their arrival in America and in the West. As outsiders to American society themselves, McKevitt argues that Jesuits gained value among native peoples as conduits and representatives in their interactions with Americans.²⁰ Sandos’ exploration of the Spanish California Missions, *Converting California*, builds an intricate web of interaction between native peoples and missionaries. While Sandos does indeed pay attention to mistreatment and even abuse found commonly through the missions, he – with equal importance – draws out the role of native agency, and particularly the ways in which native peoples could twist colonizers’ intentions to their own end. More importantly, for the purposes of this project, Sandos suggests that the mission experience gave once vastly dispersed and different people a common language and frame of reference to build new identities around.²¹ Gregory Smoak’s important work, *Ghost*

¹⁹ See, David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995). Also, Tim Gago, *Children Left Behind: Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2006). Also, Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, Lorene Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

²⁰ Gerald McKevitt, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848-1919* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

²¹ James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

Dances and Identity, investigating the origins of the Ghost Dance phenomenon on the Bannock-Shoshone Reservation, draws out a number of similar implications. Smoak argues that the Ghost Dance was, in fact, a new and syncretistic cultural invention, drawing on the influence of Christianity and blending that with more traditional cultural forms.²²

Finally, this study enters into conversation with, and draws upon, the extant literature on each of the three tribal groups involved. While this project makes an effort to take a more holistic and regional perspective, it still must pay heed to each of the separate tribal histories. Much of the published literature on the history of the Salish people and of the Flathead Reservation is the work of Robert Bigart, historian at the Salish and Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana. Along with Clarence Woodcock, Bigart documented the negotiation of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855.²³ In addition to that, Bigart also chronicled the removal of Charlot's band from the Bitterroot Valley, culminating a standoff between the Salish and the federal government over the valley that started in 1870.²⁴ Bigart is also responsible for editing and publishing volumes of primary sources, specifically from the St. Ignatius Mission, including the letters of priests, marriage and death records, and other business of the mission.²⁵

²² Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

²³ Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, *In the Name of the Salish and Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Reservation* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 1996).

²⁴ Robert J. Bigart, *Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

²⁵ Robert Bigart, ed., *Letters from the Rocky Mountain Indian Missions* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003). Also, Robert Bigart, ed., *Zealous in All Virtues: Documents of Worship and Culture Change, St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, 1890-1894* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Also, Robert Bigart and Richard T. Malouf, eds., *Life and Death at St. Mary's Mission, Montana: Births, Marriages, Deaths, and Survival among the Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1866-1891* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 2005).

The extant literature on the Blackfeet is – by comparison - somewhat scant. Much is still based upon the comprehensive but dated history of the Blackfeet, written by John C. Ewer.²⁶ More recent scholarship on the Blackfeet includes Kenneth Lockensgard's *Blackfoot Religion and the Consequences of Cultural Commoditization*, which argues that in the twentieth century, the sale of traditional Blackfoot medicine items robbed those objects of their cultural meaning and context.²⁷ Finally, the book that this study most comes into conversation with is Paul C. Rosier's *The Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation*, which argues for a cultural and political resurgence of the reservation Blackfeet from their nadir in the early allotment era.²⁸

The Nez Perce possess the largest catalogue of secondary literature of the three groups in this study. Much of that research, however, is focused on the causes, course, and consequences of the Nez Perce War. Rather, this study primarily engages with the research of Emily Greenwald, who carefully documents the history of the Nez Percés' resistance to the policy of allotment. In addition this project draws upon the work of Alvin Josephy, and his book *Nez Perce Country*, concerning Nez Perce origins, conceptions of space and history, and identity prior to their confinement on the Lapwai Reservation and the outbreak of the Nez Perce War.²⁹

The bulk of primary research comes from the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In particular, it makes extensive use of the central classified files for each of the agencies, which reveals much of the day-to-day business of the reservations, which

²⁶ John C. Ewer, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957).

²⁷ Kenneth Lockensgard, *Blackfoot Religion and the Consequences of Cultural Commoditization* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2013).

²⁸ Paul C. Rosier, *The Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation, 1912-1954* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

²⁹ Alvin M. Josephy, *Nez Perce Country* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

includes the case files of Indian Agents, school superintendents, police offices, special investigators, and other local officials. The use of these materials was meant to focus on local realities rather than large-scale bureaucratic policy. Often times, the administration of the individual agencies could vary quite widely based upon the temperaments, ideas, attitudes, and prejudices of individual agents. The local records also give a greater sense of the relationship between small-level administrators and the rank-and-file people living under the power and jurisdiction of the Indian Agencies.

In addition, local records also include the monthly and annual business of tribal council, petitions, and records of commissions sent by the tribal governments and leadership to Washington, D.C., and other important locations. These records convey a strong sense of how the tribal governments coalesced into functioning bodies, and reveal the primary business that occupied their time and energy. In addition, this project also utilizes the annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, which collected and published for the Department of the Interior annual status reports from the individual agencies, along with a compilation of annual statistics and commentary on nation-spanning Indian policy and its implementation on local agencies.

An additional block of the primary research for this project came from Marquette University's archive of the records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Primarily utilized from within this collection was local correspondence for the St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, and Holy Family Missions. These records convey a window into the daily functioning of the missions, and particularly reveal the ideologies and attitudes of individual missionaries, and especially the Jesuit priests who served as the superintendents of the missions. In addition to regular correspondence, the records also

contain histories that individual priests and sisters composed of their respective missions and of the people to whom the missions ministered. The mission records convey a sense of collective consciousness, and how Catholics within the context of the reservations defined themselves and their place within the larger Indian government framework.

The decision to use government and mission records in conjunction with one another was a conscious and deliberate choice, and carries with it an implicit argument that runs through the entirety of this project. Often, study of native interactions with missionary organizations and interactions with the United States government is done in isolation. This approach, however, inherently undermines the reality that the relationship between government institutions on the reservations and church institutions was not discreetly separated. In spite of general governmental principles favoring the separation of church and state, and the occasional times the Bureau of Indian Affairs attempted to more strictly adhere to those principles, a clear boundary between federal and church authority never firmly existed. In spite of the fact that the church and the Indian Service were neither natural nor always compatible allies, connections between the two were multiple and ran deep. Catholics, in particular, ran perhaps the most rigorously organized and hierarchical missionary effort among American Indians, and one with a large enough bureaucracy to force federal agencies into some acceptance of collaboration.

Catholics and federal agents, together, ran a program of modernization on the Indian Reservations, and the efforts of both institutions deeply influenced the history and development of the agencies and the people who lived under their jurisdiction. The mission infrastructure was indelibly linked to the government organizations, so much so that government agents inspected mission schools, plants, dormitories, and other

buildings. Furthermore, as the reservations developed a network of towns and sub-agencies, the missions and the communities that grew around them were organically included in this growing network. If we are to understand the development of the reservations from their mid-nineteenth century origins to their checker boarded, state, federal, and private realities of the twentieth century, the missions along with the government play an essential part in that development process.

Catholicism, along with Christianity, too, plays a larger role in this process. Catholic faith and identity was one of the most important “outside influences,” along with capitalism, that wove itself into the makeup of the modern reservation society and community. This was particularly the case in the Northwestern United States, where for all intents and purposes, the peoples who confederated onto the Indian reservations were not only targets of Catholic evangelization, but constituted the foundation of Catholicism in the region writ-large. The missions in Western Montana and Idaho were the pioneer institutions around which the dioceses of Boise and Helena, erected in the late-nineteenth century were built around. This more broadly integrated the history of native peoples and of Catholics more generally in the region.

Chapter I: Longue Duree in the Northwest

The road to Flathead Country lies directly north of Missoula, Montana, along U.S. Highway 93. At the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. 93 was little more than a wagon rut, only to be expanded into a road just prior to the Great Depression. It climbs out of the Clark Fork River Valley and then descends into an open trough in the mountains before straightening its course due north. Here the highway emerges into the wide Flathead Valley, which opens into a sea of green grass and alfalfa naturally irrigated by mountain streams and springs. To the east stand the Mission Mountains, craggy snowcapped peaks that plunge into the valley below, their modern name given to them by the Jesuit priests who arrived in the valley in the 1840s and used the mountains as a vital navigational landmark. To the west stand the Bitterroots and the Cabinets, a more heavily forested and dense mountain system that forms the modern border between Montana and Idaho. It was in these mountains that Lewis and Clark spent the miserable winter of 1805-1806, searching for the Nez Perce, marching through six-foot snow drifts, and eating their horses to survive. At the head of the valley sits the great Flathead Lake, which stands as a skeletal remain of a gargantuan Pleistocene glacier that carved out the valley and fed into ancient Lake Missoula, a now-extinct Ice Age inland sea that suddenly and violently emptied between 15,000 and 20,000 years ago, carving out the drainage of the Clark's Fork of the Columbia River. The lake came into existence around the same time that the first groups of Paleo-Indians were traveling southward along North America's Pacific Coastline and probing for the ice-free corridor that brought the first human beings into North America's interior.

Eight hundred years ago the itinerant ancestors of the Salish peoples who came to populate much of the mountainous Northwest would have followed virtually the same track as U.S. 93 each spring, migrating into the Flathead from the lower mountain valleys to the south to gather berries and hunt deer, elk, and bison during the summer months. Roughly 400 years ago humans became semi-permanent residents of the Flathead Valley, and these people started to diversify into various bands and kinship networks. The first “Europeans,” people of mixed French and Canadian First Nation ancestry more precisely, arrived roughly 250 years ago, as temporary visitors seeking trade in animal pelts and information. Catholic priests, Protestant preachers, and Mormon missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century as the first permanent non-Indian residents of the valley. Following them came the United States military, and then the Office of Indian Affairs, and then finally scores of white settlers who flowed into the valley following the allotment of the Flathead Indian Reservation, all tracing the course paved today by U.S. Highway 93.

Taking a drive north from Missoula today brings a keen observer brief glimpses of this simple valley’s long history. The sheer mountain ranges and rolling glacial moraines call to mind the valley’s prehistoric past. The highway then takes you through the towns of Ronan and St. Ignatius, a Jesuit mission founded in the mid-nineteenth century, and a symbol of America and the Western World’s mission to bring Christianity among the Indians. A little further north lays Pablo, the headquarters of the Office of Indian Affairs (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs) and the seat of federal power projected over the Flathead Valley since the nineteenth century. Beyond that, at the southern shore of Flathead Lake, lies Polson, a predominantly non-Indian municipality nestled in the

reservation and made possible by federally abrogated treaties that opened Indian lands to purchase and settlement. In a very real sense, a drive through the Flathead Valley is a drive through 10,000 years of history. Beyond that, U.S. 93 provides a living link to the interconnected web of environment, government, and cultural imperialism that undergirds the history of Indians in America's twentieth century and the realities of Native American life on reservations today.

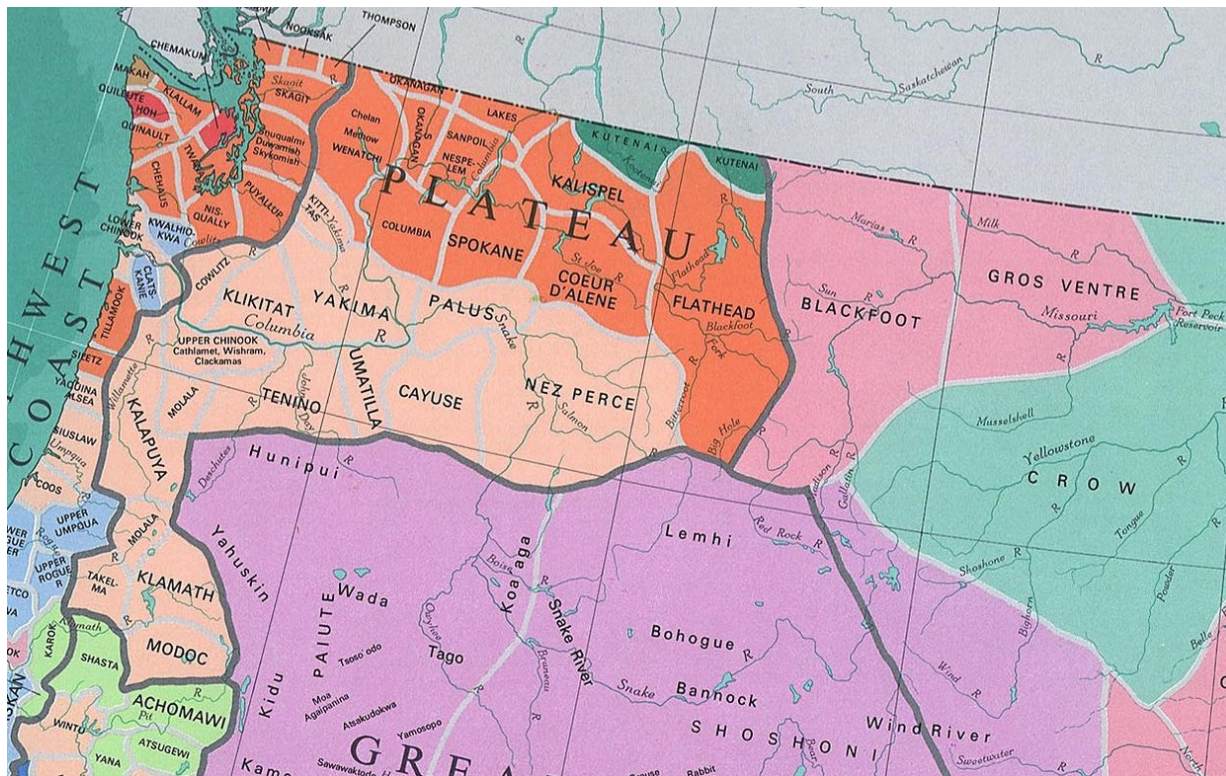
In 1987, Patricia Limerick referred to these unbroken links between the American West's past and present as the "Legacy of Conquest." These links left visible "scars" in the land and in the people of the American West created by the ordeals of settlement, conflict, subjugation, and coexistence. To a large extent, Limerick's words remain as true today as when they were first articulated, you need only to take a drive north from Missoula, Montana, if you need reassurance of that.

A history of the Indian Northwest, even a modern history, follows conventions of time and relativity that uncomfortably bend the comfortable paradigm of standard monograph writing. Most often many scholars want to look at their contribution as a single brick in a larger wall, and in the process want to narrow their gaze to an arbitrarily defined block of time. Most often the goal, then, is to expand minute detail at the expense of a somewhat more "macrohistorical" perspective. "Big" history is more often than not left up to the authors of field-wide syntheses.

These typical "unwritten rules," however, confine the practice of Native American history in a number of unsatisfactory ways. First, and most egregiously, it assumes that an entirely Western-Civilization-oriented method of organizing history is

adequate to describe a decidedly non-Western Civilization history. Arbitrarily truncated timelines exclude any number of various Native American constructions of the relationship between time and place. Second, a core theme of virtually any Native history will be contested space between one or more cultures. Native American history bends the common framework of “nation-state-based history,” narratives organized around assumptions of borders or common cultural institutions, to its breaking point. All the more so has this been the case in the past decade and a half, with ethnohistorians coming nearly to the point of wanting to throw out even the concept of the “tribe” as an ultimately useless category, corresponding to no historical reality whatsoever. As such it becomes imperative to establish a sense of multiple waves of human settlement in the same location over time, in order to anchor history around a common geography where it is impossible to establish a sufficiently static cultural identity, either chronologically or spatially. Finally, and most importantly, it is imperative to approach Indian history on its own terms and according to its own logic, rather than to try and stuff it into the tidy periodizations of American history. Much of American Indian history is defined by the evolution of the landscape and the people who populated it, not by party systems, economic cycles, or political landmarks. It takes a sweeping look at the human and pre-human past of North America, not the brief political life of the nation that resides between the 49th Parallel and the Rio Grande. American Indian History starts with the receding of the ice sheets, not the signing the Declaration of Independence.

Linguistic-Cultural Map of the Northwest¹



Between 25,000 and 30,000 years ago, the Cordilleran Ice Sheet, which covered much of modern British Columbia, Alberta, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Western Montana, reached its apex and began to recede. Arid conditions, especially compared to the Laurentide Ice Sheet, which covered much of the plains and the modern Midwest, virtually “starved” the glacier, and the Cordilleran Sheet thawed much more rapidly. This geological event set into motion a chain reaction of geographic and climatological changes that made human migration into the Americas possible, and also triggered a cycle of melting that eventually brought about the end of the North American

¹ Map excerpted from United States Geological Survey Map, produced December 31, 1969. Public Domain License.

Pleistocene, the recession of glacial buildup back to the Arctic Circle, and geographic transformation of the American continent.²

By roughly 10,000 years ago, the glacial ice covering modern Montana and Idaho receded sufficiently to allow human settlement. Glaciers largely retreated into the mountains, above permanent snowlines, clearing valleys, freeing rivers, creating lakes, and allowing the growth of forests and valley-trough grasslands. The biodiversity of the region also began to stabilize at roughly the same time, following the cataclysmic Pleistocene Extinction, the most geologically recent mass extinction in planetary history. Much of the large game as well as many of the smaller mammals that populated the region emerged as genetic heirs of their more robust, Ice Age ancestors. Bison, which first emerge in the fossil record during the late Ice Age, appeared to be among the Pleistocene mass extinction's few survivors, as they quickly adapted to the abundance of grasslands freed by glacial melting. The various deer species, along with elk, which dominated the forest lands of the Northwest, appear to have sprung from common megafauna ancestors. Beavers, which would become the prime currency of the eighteenth-century fur trade, along with squirrels, rabbits and other small mammals emerged through a series of micro-evolutions, as smaller, more adaptable versions of Ice Age species. The freeing of rivers by glacial melt also allowed for the invasion of various fish species inland from coastal regions. The most successful of these colonizers was the trout, a major staple of Northwestern Indian diets, related to once-salt-water-dwelling

² Ruth and William Eble, *The Encyclopedia of the Environment* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 14-57. Derek Hayes, *America Discovered: A Historical Atlas of North American Exploration* (New York: Douglas & MacEntyre, 2009), xi-xxxiv. Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3-23.

chars that adapted to life in freshwater estuaries. Quickly, these fish thrived in the cold and fast running waters of Montana and Idaho's glacially fed-streams.³

There exist two dominant theories on the origins of human movement into the Northwest. West of the Rocky Mountain Front, it is believed that the first human settlers likely arrived from the Pacific Coast, in a sedimentary process of migration that brought people east from Asia, skirting glacial buildup along the coastline. Linguistic and forensic anthropologists believe this process started as early as 16,500 years ago, in a series of punctuated movements that brought small groups of settlers into North America over thousands of years. Anthropologists believe that in a span of roughly 7,500 years from 14,500 BCE to 7,000 BCE a navigable or even walkable passage along the coast opened intermittently, offering brief opportunities for migration. As evidence, experts point to the extreme linguistic diversity of Indian cultures in modern Washington, Oregon, and Idaho where there exist four major language families along with dozens of isolates and other languages considered unclassifiable. To experts this suggests a history of a multitude series of human settlements, with enough isolation between each migration to enforce linguistic difference.⁴

East of the mountain front, the classic Beringian Theory of human migration still holds, where in several millenniums the seismic event that broke the Cordilleran Ice Sheet from the Laurentide Glacier, exposed a small land bridge in the Bering Strait (which would have only been intermittently open) and then cleared an "ice-free corridor" that followed the eastern front of the Rockies south into the interior of the continent. The

³ Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History*, 3-23. Andrew P. Hendry and Stephen C. Stearns, ed., *Evolution Illuminated: Salmon and Their Relatives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Stanley Klein, *North American Wildlife* (New York: Gallery Books, 1984).

⁴ C. Michael Barton, Geoffrey A. Clark, David R. Yesner, and Georges A. Pearson, eds., *The Settlement of the American Continents: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Human Biogeography* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 9-76.

existence of large Indian language groups (Algonkian, Siouan, and Athapaskan) and few isolates east of the mountains suggest that initial migrations into the interior consisted of a shorter series of very large migratory groups.⁵

The group that we recognize today as the Nez Perces, likely arrived into eastern Washington and the panhandle of Idaho sometime between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, speakers of a language rooted in a Penutian tradition that has late-Pleistocene roots. Linguistic evidence suggests that the Nez Perces emerged from a group or groups of migrants that had followed the coastal route from Asia, fanning out into the basin areas between the Sierra-Cascades and Coastal Ranges in the central valleys of Washington, Oregon, and California as glacial ice retreated. Over centuries, these Penutian speakers diversified into dozens of cultural groupings, the largest of which consisted of, along with the Nez Perce, the Umatillas, Klamaths, Yakimas, and Yokuts.⁶

The modern Confederated Tribes of the Flathead Nation actually consist, mostly, of a number of Salish-speaking cultures whose origins more than likely also reside in the coastal migrations of the Pleistocene. Pre-contact, the great majority of Salish speakers resided in the mountain valleys of Southern British Columbia, and Northern Montana and Idaho. Isolation in the mountains over centuries caused a divide in the Salish language into three major-sub families, and within the sub-families Salishan peoples further divided into relatively distinct cultural groupings. In modern Montana, the dominant groups which emerged were the Flatheads, a name given to Northern Salish tribes people by British traders, and the Kalispels, or Pend d'Oreilles. Finally, the modern

⁵ C. Michael Barton, et. al., eds., *The Settlement of the American Continents*, 39-48. Also, John D. Bengtson, *In Hot Pursuit of Language in Prehistory: Essays in the Four Fields of Anthropology* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2008).

⁶ Rodney P. Carlisle and J. Geoffrey Golson, eds., *Native America from Prehistory to First Contact* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 22-32.

Confederated Flatheads also consist of the Kootenais, a cultural group that had long lived in close proximity to Salish peoples, but who spoke an entirely different language with unclear origins. Yet, long standing trade relationships and military alliances nonetheless brought Kootenai peoples into a closer cultural orbit to their Flathead neighbors. The Kootenais who came to eventually reside among the Flatheads were culturally part of a group referred to as the Lower Kootenai, distinct from the bands that resided in modern British Columbia. Even the southern division split and diversified; the peoples who ultimately took residence along the upper stretches of the Columbia River came to be known as the Shuswap Band, while the Kootenais who migrated into the Flathead Valley, and who were ultimately confederated with the Flatheads and Kalispels were known as the Ksankas.⁷

The origins of the Blackfeet, on the other hand, remain largely cloudy, with most of the details of their early and proto-tribal existence being matters of fierce debate. Some members of the tribe itself insist that the Blackfeet emerged from among the earliest migrants across the Beringian land bridge. Further oral traditions place their roots firmly in the Northwestern Plains and argue for a long history in the region, or even claim Blackfeet peoples as the original human inhabitants of the region. Anthropological dissection of these origin and creation stories has produced fairly convincing evidence that, indeed such stories contained glimmers of a long-standing cultural memory of the experience of migration into North America and the settlement of the interior. Whether

⁷ Carlisle and Golson, eds., *Native America from Prehistory to First Contact*, 22-32.

these memories truly belonged to the original Blackfeet, however, remains highly debatable.⁸

Being speakers of an Algonkin-based language, linguistic evidence does not seem to support claims of an ancient origin. The oldest-known stable language families in the Americas are the Athapaskan languages spoken all along the distance of the Rocky Mountain front from Northern Canada to the American Southwest, and the Mayan-Nauhatl languages spoken throughout Central America and into the Andes Mountains. As far as we know all other language families appear to have originated from now extinct older languages, from subsequent migrations, or a combination of both forces. More than likely, just prior to sustained European contact, proto-Blackfeet peoples resided in the Great Lakes region in close proximity to their closest modern cultural relatives, the Ojibwes. Forces that are not entirely understood pushed the Blackfeet's migration west. Among the strongest theories out there claims that the Blackfeet might have been displaced – along with the rest of the Algonkin-speaking world – by the Haudenosaunee (later known as the Iroquois) Mourning Wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This two-century-long process of Algonkin-Iroquoian violence itself is only barely understood by experts. They appeared to have been triggered by an outbreak of disease epidemics and an exhaustion of fur-bearing species populations in Haudenosaunee controlled territories in modern upstate New York and New Brunswick. In response, Haudenosaunee peoples reorganized themselves into the Iroquois Confederacy, and

⁸ Jeremiah Curtain, *Native American Creation Myths* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004). Also, Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 53-66.

invaded their Algonkin neighbors to the west, seeking captives to strengthen their numbers and hunting grounds to enrich themselves.⁹

It is quite possible that proto-Blackfoot peoples fled west to escape capture or death in the Great Lakes region. Their movement into the wide basin between the outer ranges of the Cypress, Belt, and Bear Paw Mountains and the interior front of the Rockies in modern Montana and Alberta likely took more than a century. Proto-Blackfoot probably moved in small stages, along the way intermarrying into the Siouan cultures that dominated the Northern Plains, greatly increasing their strength in numbers. By the time they arrived in the West, probably in the mid-seventeenth century, three distinct Blackfoot cultures had emerged: the Kainais, the Piegans, and the Siksikas. Each group governed its own affairs and lived almost entirely independent of the other, as the three bands only met to coordinate mutual defense or aggression. Blackfoot likely chased the Salishan peoples already living in the Judith River region further west into the interior basin of the Rocky Mountains. And with their arrival, the Blackfoot largely helped to set the human geography of the Indian Northwest that non-Indians would encounter: with the Blackfoot bands dominating the mountain front, and competing with Plains tribes for power, Salishan peoples populating the interior valleys of the Mountains, and the Nez Perce occupying much of the Columbia River Plateau between back range of the Rockies and the coastal mountain ranges.

Before any of the natives of the Northwest ever encountered whites, the ripple effects of European arrival in the Americas reached them in the eighteenth century. In

⁹ Karen Bush Gibson, *The Blackfeet: People of the Dark Moccasins* (Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2003), 5-10. John C. Ewer, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northern Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 3-18. For a good overview on debates regarding the Iroquois Mourning Wars and their impact upon the Algonkian peoples of the early Midwest see, Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

1680, Puebloan peoples living in modern New Mexico revolted against Spanish colonization, slaughtering missionaries and chasing the surviving military garrison out of Santa Fe and back down the Rio Grande River to Coahuila. Among the many things that the Spanish left behind in their hasty retreat from New Mexico were several herds of horses, which within a few years the Pueblos learned how to breed and began to trade them further north. Horses thrived in the grasslands of the Great Plains, largely because it was the exact environment in which the species had evolved. During the late Pleistocene ancestor species of the horse and the camel emerged in North America and migrated – likely backtracking the same route being used by humans to enter the Americas – across to Asia. After the close of any overland route to the Eastern Hemisphere, horses went extinct in America, likely due to changing environmental pressures combined with being hunted to death by Paleo-Indians. Upon their return, their population exploded in an environmental niche that had been vacated by their prior extinction. Total numbers are unknown, but by the eighteenth century it seems likely that the horse’s population was already in the millions. By the second decade of the 1700s virtually every native group living west of the Mississippi River possessed a herd.¹⁰

The proliferation of horses unleashed an economic revolution in the Indian West. Almost overnight, horses drastically improved lines of trade and communication between bands, kin groups, and tribes. Apart from increasing Native Americans’ ability to travel great distances for sources of food and exchange, horses altered military strategy and the balance of power on the plains and in the mountains. For plains tribes like the Blackfeet horses became a powerful offensive weapon, giving Indians the ability to perform fast

¹⁰ For a masterful overview of the Pueblo Revolt, its causes, and consequences, see David Roberts, *The Pueblo Revolt: The Secret Rebellion that Drove the Spaniards out of the Southwest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

and devastating hit-and-run warfare on their enemies and rivals. Furthermore, on the plains, the size of one's horse herd conferred on a band or tribe power and prestige. If any one group possessed enough horses to equip their neighbors with equestrian mobility – through gifts or other ritualized exchanges – they could quite literally exchange their animal wealth for power in the form of allies and clients. For tribes in the mountains and on the Columbia Plateau, horses served as more of a defensive weapon. Unlike the peoples of the plains, there is little evidence that the Flatheads and Nez Perces reoriented their cultures around equestrianism to the same extent, instead mixing equestrianism with fishing and horticulture. For the most part, horses gave tribes of the plateau enough martial strength to deter would-be attackers from the Plains or from the Great Basin with the threat of a mounted counterassault.¹¹

At roughly the same time that horses arrived to the Northwest, European-manufactured iron and steel also made its way to the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces, around the turn of the eighteenth century. The earliest trade in European goods in the Northwest largely came through the villages of the Mandans and Hidatsas, Siouan-speaking horticulturalists who lived along the Big Bend of the Missouri River in modern North Dakota. French and Métis traders from Upper Canada first made contact with the Mandans in the late seventeenth century, and quickly the Mandans' pallisaded, wood-thatched village squares became the most significant center of European and Indian exchange north of the Rio Grande River. Positioned near the joining of the Missouri and the Red River of the North, the Mandans and their numerous economic clients possessed the ability to gather and distribute goods across nearly the entirety of the northern interior of the continent.

¹¹ For a synthesis on the impact of horses, see, Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 268-275.

Much like horses, European wares also catalyzed a native North American market revolution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Early on, the most coveted goods Indians desired were cooking implements and utensils along with knives, hatchets, and tools. Iron and steel pots cooked much more quickly and evenly than clay and ceramic pots manufactured by Native Peoples, they were also thinner, lighter, more durable, and more easily transported. Moreover, iron and steel knives and hatchets lasted far longer than the implements manufactured by Indians out of obsidian or bone, which took countless hours of labor and incredible skill to make. As such, a well-made knife was often considered by natives to be unbelievably valuable. During his first expedition into the West in 1789, for example, British explorer Alexander MacKenzie found he was easily able to supply his expedition with horses and other wares by exchanging daggers and other metal implements with Kootenais, Slaves, Crees, and other Northwestern Indians. Other than these finished products, Indians also often desired small trinkets and baubles made from copper or iron, items which could, with relative ease, be broken or melted down, and then reshaped into arrow and spear points, greatly increasing the lethality of Indian-made weapons.¹²

While much emphasis has often been placed on Indian's gained access to firearms due to the opening of trans-hemispheric exchange, at least for the remainder of the eighteenth century guns were little more than curios, sometimes desired by chieftains and medicine men as items of prestige. In practical application, however, a muzzle-loaded musket or breech-loaded rifle was far less accurate and hardly as lethal as an Indian-made bow or spear when fired from horseback at a moving target. This made many eighteenth-

¹² Alexander MacKenzie, *The Journals of Alexander MacKenzie: Exploring Across Canada, 1789 and 1793* (Toronto: Narrative Press, 2001). Also Colin Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 293-300.

century firearms entirely useless for equestrian hunting. Furthermore, since many western Indians fought wars in mounted and scattered hit-and-fade attacks, rather than fighting on foot and in mass formations, early European firearms were of little use in warfare as well. It would not be until the middle of the nineteenth century, and the proliferation of repeating, lever-action firearms that rifles and ammunition would become important trade items for Indians.¹³

As for Europeans themselves, strangers and outsiders first appeared in what is now the Northwestern United States in the middle of the eighteenth century. The first “non-Indian” voyagers into what is now Montana and Idaho came largely from mixed French and Indian descent, though a few fully-European companions, largely French or Scots-Irish backwoodsman, arrived as well. These European visitors almost exclusively arrived as agents of the British-controlled Northwest and Hudson’s Bay Companies, and as such the Flatheads, Blackfeet, and Nez Perces make their first appearances in the historical record in the journals and ledgers of these companies, who encountered them in the 1750s.

By and large, Flatheads and Nez Perces enjoyed relatively amicable relations with the newcomers, once the latter could gain enough trust to ensure the former that they were but transients and not permanent neighbors. For the Indians of the interior plateau, the European newcomers were welcome guests largely because their arrival eased native access to the trade in metal. Prior to first contact such trade largely traveled west along the Missouri River, meaning that it more often than not moved through middlemen and hostile territory. Plains peoples with sufficient equestrian mobility could quite easily

¹³ See, Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999). Also, James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

dominate this narrow trade lane, and impose whatever price they wished to allow goods to peaceably travel through their territory. The new economic opportunities that arrived with European traders on the plateau, encouraged the Nez Perces, Flatheads, and other peoples to quickly reassure newcomers of their amicable intentions. As a result, these tribes accepted a certain level of cultural imposition on the part of the newcomers in order to cement alliances. Chiefly, this meant that Flathead and Nez Perce peoples allowed traders to take Indian wives and allowed missionary activity, so long as individual missionaries did not overstay their welcomes.

While European arrival temporarily enriched the Indians of the plateau, for the Blackfeet, the arrival of outsiders was somewhat problematic. Particularly for the Piegans, who had lived in more than a century of strife with their Salishan neighbors, the enrichment of the Flatheads threatened their position in the mountain foothills. Furthermore, the new arrivals economically threatened the Piegans, who depended greatly on their ability to dominate trade coming west from the Missouri. More than a potential military threat, European presence brought unwelcome competition. For Kainais and Sikiskas, European arrival was somewhat more of a mixed-bag of positive and negative consequences. The Kainais, the furthest-north dwelling band of the Blackfeet, who ranged between the Milk and Red Deer Rivers in modern Alberta, quickly developed a relatively lucrative trade in deerskins and bison hides with British traders. Siksikas, on the other hand, welcomed new trade opportunities, but resented how the British empowered and armed their rival Plains Crees who lived to the east.¹⁴

¹⁴ See, Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983). Also, David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West: 1807-1840; A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Northwest Indians' first recorded encounter with agents of the newly-formed United States came in 1805-1806, in the form of the Corps of Discovery, more popularly known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In the spring of 1805, the Corps of Discovery arrived in modern Montana following the Missouri River west after they had spent the winter of 1804-1805 camped with the Mandans in North Dakota. Lewis, Clark, and company reached the source of the Missouri River, near Three Forks, Montana, in the summer of 1805, and then turned their course up the Jefferson River reaching the Continental Divide and making contact with the Shoshones on the rim of the Great Basin in the fall, where they traded their canoes and other heavy equipment for horses. With wintry conditions threatening in the mountains in 1805 the Corps, led by a Shoshone scout, traversed the Big Hole River Valley and descended into the Bitterroot Valley, following it north searching for a gap in the Bitterroot Mountains. Along the way, they encountered the Flatheads, who welcomed Lewis and Clark, re-outfitted the expedition, assured the Corps that the Indian peoples living to the west of the Mountains were friends of the Flatheads, and would receive the expedition with open arms, and, finally, promised that when British traders returned in the spring that the Flatheads would alert the British to the Corps of Discovery's intention to reach and camp on the Pacific Coast (in 1805, Lewis and Clark still hoped to rendezvous with a British merchant vessel in order to arrange for passage back to Virginia).

In the Bitterroot Mountains, Lewis and Clark nearly met with disaster. Their guide missed Lolo Pass, a relatively short route through the mountains and into the interior plateau of the Columbia. Instead, they wandered through the densest portion of

Also, Richard S. Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

the mountains, where they ran out of provisions and were left with no choice other than to slaughter and eat some of the horses with which the Shoshones had outfitted them. Nez Perces found Lewis and Clark in September 1805, half-starved, staggering out of the mountains and into the Columbia Plateau. Moreover, Lewis and Clark likely might have died if not for their friendly reception by the Nez Perces, first mentioned in their journals on September 20, 1805, who greeted the desperate men with dried bison meat, bread made from camas roots, and fish.

William Clark, marching several miles ahead of the rest of his company, as an advance scout, stumbled wearily upon three Nez Perce boys, who led him to their nearby camp. Lewis and the rest of the expedition joined them a few days later. Nez Perces took the haggard Americans in, fed them, resupplied them, and allowed them to regain their strength. Without a doubt, the Flatheads and Nez Perces guided the Corps of Discovery away from disaster, and assured the survival of the expedition through the most perilous segment of their journey. For that, they received Lewis and Clark's sincere gratitude, and among all of the many alien peoples the Americans met in their long journey, they held the Indians of the Columbia Plateau in the highest regard. Lewis and Clark parted ways with the Indians of the interior plateau on remarkably peaceable terms. The two groups exchanged offerings of enduring friendship. Some Nez Perce even claim that William Clark sired a son with a Nez Perce woman while the Corps remained camped with them, which the Indians took as a gesture of lasting friendship between themselves and the United States. Good feelings abounded all around as the Corps headed off down the Snake River, and without a doubt, with winter coming in 1805 Lewis and Clark departed

Idaho having scored the single greatest American-Indian relations victory of their nation's history.

Camped at the mouth of the Columbia in the winter of 1805-06, the British ship failed to ever materialize. Lewis and Clark returned up the Columbia and crossed back into Montana in the spring. On their journey west, the Corps never directly encountered the Blackfeet. It seems unlikely, however, that the Americans' journey to the headwaters of the Missouri ever went unnoticed. On the return journey Lewis and Clark split up in Montana, agreeing to rendezvous at the mouth of the Yellowstone River by mid-summer. Lewis went north into the Judith Basin (which Meriwether Lewis named for his girlfriend) and into the heart of Blackfeet Country. There, the Piegans entered into their first contact with official agents of the United States with the general mixture of curiosity and contempt with which they had regarded all of the other recent non-Indian newcomers to their lands.

Blackfeet scouts marked and watched the movement of Lewis' company from afar, as they entered the Judith Basin on horses given to them by the Flatheads. Finally, after two weeks, two younger and brasher Piegan warriors rode into Lewis' camp in an attempt to communicate with the Americans. With the expedition's best interpreters (Sacagawea and Pierre Charbonneau) absent, however, the talks quickly broke down into hostility. One of the warriors attacked Lewis' company with a knife, while the other made off in an attempt to steal the expedition's horses. Lewis shot and killed the young Piegan, the only shot intentionally fired at an Indian during the entirety of the Corps of Discovery's trek, while the other escaped. Lewis and company then quickly broke camp to flee Blackfeet Country, fearing a reprisal was likely chasing them. For the Piegans'

part, their first encounter with Americans had gone not much differently than their encounters with British traders, a mixture of mystery and hostility. The violent exchange on the Judith River likely only hardened their mistrust of outsiders, particularly since the Piegans would have undoubtedly known that the Americans were at least friendly with their hated Salish rivals. A year after Lewis and Clark had successfully ingratiated themselves and their country to the Indians of the mountains and the interior plateau, they had made their first mortal enemy on the Northern Plains.¹⁵

Following Lewis and Clark, life in the Indian Northwest continued on much as it had since the early eighteenth century. Intermittent visits from traders (a greater volume now coming from Auguste Choteau's St. Louis-based American Fur Company) patterned the seasons between summer hunts on the plains, falls spent in the mountains foraging, winters huddled in the river bottoms, and springs spent clearing forest underbrush to encourage the growth of desirable, fruit-bearing vegetation. By and large, the interior Northwest after Lewis and Clark fell from the United States' national consciousness, as the Ohio Country and Old Southwest grabbed the feverish attention of America's military machine, migratory obsession, opportunists, and speculators.

Thus, in the 1810s, 20s, and 30s, Blackfeet, Nez Perces, and Flatheads dwelt in blissful ignorance of the winds of change brewing in the East. Lewis and Clark arrived in the same manner as any other stranger or alien Northwest natives had ever encountered: as transients seeking shelter and hospitality before they moved on their way. Nothing that any Indian in the West had ever encountered would have instructed them to doubt that

¹⁵ See, Frederick Hoxie and Jay T. Nelson, eds., *Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country: The Native American Perspective* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007). Also, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *Lewis and Clark Through Indian Eyes: Nine Indian Writers on the Legacy of the Expedition* (New York: Knopf-Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008). Also, Anthony Brandt, ed., *The Journals of Lewis & Clark* (New York: National Geographic Press, 2002).

pattern would ever change. No Indian could possibly have anticipated the extent to which the Americans planned to alter the entire continent. No native individual could have ever comprehended the intentions and consequences of the Jeffersonian Empire of Liberty. Peaceful coexistence was a relatively easy prospect so long as contact remained brief and impermanent. Migration, settlement, and empire, however, posed an entirely different set of questions and problems, that none who ever crossed paths with the Corps of Discovery ever considered.

The first true harbingers of change arrived in the 1830s as harvesters of souls, missionaries. Among the first “warriors of Christ” to appear in force in the Northwest were Moravians, a Protestant sect that sprung from the teachings of Jan Hus in Central Europe. By the 1730s a significant Moravian community emerged in Pennsylvania, where the American Moravian Church was transformed by the tumults of the Great Awakenings. Moravians would be among the first to attempt to extend the fevered pitch of revivalism to the Indians of the West. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the church poured its resources into training missionaries that would be attached to the American Fur Company, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Russian-American Fur Company. By the 1830s, their presence extended from Alaska down the Pacific Coast and into the Oregon Territory. Following the Moravians came other Protestant sects, also inspired by the fervor of East Coast Revivalism to gain Indian converts. In the Northwest,

Presbyterians found a moderate level of success in establishing missions near trading hubs and quasi-military outposts.¹⁶

Among the most important of these Presbyterian “frontiersmen” was Henry Spalding, who, along with his wife, established a mission among the Nez Perces in 1837, near modern Lapwai, Idaho. Spalding was a native of Bath, New York, and departed in the late 1820s to attend university in Ohio at Western Reserve - which later became Case Western University. While in college Spalding entered into correspondence with a young woman from Western New York, who would later become his wife, Eliza Hart. The two finally met in 1831, and were married in 1833 after Spalding completed his education. In 1836, Spalding was set to attend a seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, when he received an assignment from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions - an evangelical Protestant organization based out of Boston - as missionary to the Nez Perces. He and his wife Eliza departed for Idaho on a wagon train along with several other missionaries in the summer of 1836.¹⁷

Departing with the Spaldings was another husband-wife duo of Presbyterian missionaries, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, who, also in 1837, established a mission near modern day Walla Walla, Washington, meant to serve the Indians of the Columbia Plateau, including the Nez Perces, Cayuses, Walla Wallas, and Yakimas. Marcus Whitman was born in the Burned-Over district of New York, and trained as a physician. His wife, Narcissa, was a physics and chemistry teacher, who married Marcus in 1836 -

¹⁶ J.C.S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1764-1800* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2001). Also, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Deborah Lynn Dawson, “Laboring in my Savior’s Vineyard: The Mission of Eliza Hart Spalding,” (Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 1988). Also, a brief, if dated biography of Spalding, see, Clifford Merrill Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding: A Pioneer of Old Oregon* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1936).

in no small part - due to her own desire to travel west as a missionary and the unwillingness of the ABCFM to appoint a single woman. The two established their home, and on March 14, 1837, Narcissa gave birth to their first child, Alice Clarissa Whitman, who supposedly became the first Anglo-American to be born in the Oregon Territory. Their family remained at Walla Walla, and ministered to both Indians and incoming American settlers until 1847, when their mission was destroyed by Cayuses, Walla Wallas, and Nez Perces.¹⁸

As characterized by Michael Coleman, these early Presbyterians, charged with their duties by the Board of Foreign Missions, possessed a complex and contradictory mixture of conservative and revolutionary impulses. By and large they came from highly conservative social settings in the Northeast. Yet, their religious worldviews were often times radical and, even revolutionary: proposing a rebirth of Christianity and, indeed, an evangelized United States that would wipe out the inequities of early capitalism and make “all men (and women)” brothers and sisters in baptism. Beyond this, the ideology of the ABCFM and similarly disposed Protestant evangelical organizations believed, at least as far as Native Americans were concerned, that baptism and evangelization could bridge the civilizational gaps between Americans and Indians and “bond them together in fraternity” through the word of the gospel, and the spread of Christian and Western values of work, frugality, and charity. The ideology that pushed these early Presbyterian missionaries - like the Spaldings and the Whitmans - West eventually even found its way

¹⁸ Clifford Drury also wrote a two volume history of the Whitman Mission, which was never published. In 1985, his son gave publishing rights to the Northwest Interpretive Association. See, Clifford Merrill Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon* (Seattle, WA: Northwest Interpretive Association, 1986). Also, Jonathan Howes Webster, “The ABCFM and the First Presbyterian Missions in the Northwest,” *American Presbyterians* 65 (1987), 173-185. Also, Lawrence G. Coates, “The Spalding-Whitman and Lemhi Missions: A Comparison,” *Idaho Yesterdays* 31 (1987), 38-46. Also, Julie Roy Jeffery, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

to the language of the progressive Indian reform politics of the 1880s, supported by figures such as Henry Laurens Dawes, Helen Hunt Jackson, and others, born of the same Northeastern social and religious context.¹⁹

Catholics also arrived in the 1840s, and leading the Catholic charge into the Indian Northwest were the Jesuits. International events largely thrust the Jesuits into the American West. After first being suppressed in Europe during the middle of the eighteenth century, a new round of repression in the nineteenth century brought thousands of European-born priests of the Society of Jesus to the United States, primarily in three waves: the first being catalyzed by the order's expulsion from Russia in 1820, the second following their exile from Spain in 1834, and the last brought about by the Jesuits' ejection from Rome following the Revolutions of 1848.²⁰

In the United States, the order reorganized itself, with intent of carrying on its mission of education and evangelization, setting up some of the first Catholic colleges in the United States (Santa Clara, the University of San Francisco), and sending eager novitiates "west" to convert Indians.²¹ The great pioneer of Jesuit activity in the Northwest was Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, whose life has been mythologized almost beyond the point of historical credibility, but whose singular significance remains undeniable. Born in Dendermonde, in Walloon Belgium, 30 January 1801, after attending

¹⁹ See, Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1985). Also, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings of the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1973).

²⁰ Gerald McKeivitt, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848-1919* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

²¹ Actually, since California, with its Spanish heritage, would become one of the first significant Catholic bastions for Jesuits in the United States along with Maryland (which was Pierre-Jean De Smet's entrepot into the United States), often times the "Catholic Frontier" worked in the opposite direction, from west to east. Even more particularly it is probably fair to say that both the "settlement" and "Catholic" frontiers jumped from the modern Midwest to the West Coast in the mid-nineteenth century, and then only later filled-in the interior of the continent. Paula Jean Miller and Richard Fossey, *Mapping the Catholic Cultural Landscape* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

seminary, de Smet, as a novitiate, followed Belgian Jesuits to Baltimore in 1821, on the gambit that Catholic Maryland would offer him and others refuge from rising anti-Jesuit sentiment in Europe. By the late 1820s de Smet relocated to the frontier city of St. Louis, Missouri, where he taught at the St. Regis Seminary and came into his first contact with Native North Americans, Catholic converts from the Osage, Pawnee, and Kansa peoples of the Central Plains.²²

De Smet spent the 1830s mapping the Missouri River, talking with traders, and planning to relocate even deeper into the North American interior, following the incipient stream of prospectors, gamblers, scoundrels, and opportunists then beginning to trickle over the newly opened Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. Catholic movement into the Northwest was further spurred by a series of somewhat mysterious Salish commissions that arrived in St. Louis in the 1830s. A full understanding of why the Flatheads traveled the distance of the Great Plains to request that “Black Robes” - Jesuits - be sent to live among them is likely impossible to ascertain. In the hands of Catholics, themselves, the stories of these Flathead commissions have almost assuredly been warped and distorted for the purpose of securing Catholic’s evangelical claims in the face of hostile Protestant evangelical competition. Nonetheless, whatever fuller purpose the Flatheads might have sought, their journeys east commenced the Catholic history in the Northwest region.

The Flatheads of Montana were supposedly first introduced to the concepts of the Roman Catholic faith, and introduced to the Jesuit order, by way of a group of Mohawk Iroquois, under the leadership of headman Old Ignace, who settled in the Bitterroot

²² A comprehensive collection of De Smet’s letters provide an insight on to his own thoughts on his life’s work. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, eds., *Life, Letters, and Travels of Fr. Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873* (New York: F.P. Harper, 1905). Also, James B. Kirker, ed., *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters* (New York: James B. Kirker, 1863). Few truly even-handed accounts of the Jesuit Pioneer exist, perhaps the best is Robert C. Kariker, *Father Peter Jean De Smet: Jesuit in the West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

Valley of Montana in the 1820s, brought west by the British fur trade being conducted out of Rupert's Land. Ignace told the Flatheads that the "Black Robes" possessed considerable knowledge and power, prompting the peoples of the Bitterroot Valley to seek an alliance with the order of priests, in hopes that it would guarantee their safety and power over their enemies, particularly the Crows and the Blackfeet. The first of these commissions headed east in 1831, escorted down the Missouri River by the American Fur Company. In St. Louis, The Flatheads gained an audience with William Clark, now acting in the capacity of the commissioner of the frontier Indians, but Clark informed them that, at the time, no Jesuits were available to travel with them back west.

Old Ignace himself supposedly lead two further commissions to St. Louis in 1835 and 1837, again requesting the assigning of a Jesuit priest to the Flatheads. With the Jesuits' limited resources at the time being fully committed to mission activity on the Southern and Central Plains, once more, both of these commissions returned to Montana empty-handed. A final commission, sent in 1839, and lead by the Mohawk headman's son, Young Ignace, gained an audience with the Bishop of St. Louis, who granted their request, and promised that at the soonest possible date, a Jesuit would be sent to Montana. In 1840, De Smet's plans for a relocation west came to fruition, as he was assigned to establish a mission among the Flatheads.²³

²³ See, Robert Kariker, *Father Peter John De Smet*. Also, a suspect, but usable history of the Flathead Commissions was published in the *Saint Louis Catholic Historical Review*. See, Rev. J. Rothensteiner, "The Flat-Head and Nez Perce Delegation to St. Louis, 1831-1839," *Saint Louis Catholic Historical Review*, Vols. 2 & 3 (St. Louis, MO: Catholic Historical Society of St. Louis, 1920), 183-197. Also, Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 185-187. Finally, Wilfred Schoenberg, a Jesuit historian of the missions in the Northwest, remains among the most widely published figures on the topic, though his interpretations can tend toward an overly sympathetic view Jesuit missionaries. See, Wilfred P. Schoenberg, *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1982).

De Smet, along with Jesuit Fathers Gregory Mengarini and Nicolas Point, dedicated St. Mary's Mission in Montana's Bitterroot Valley on September 24, 1841, near the location of modern Stevensville, Montana. On his trip west he also claimed other tribes that he had encountered, such as the Crows and the Blackfeet, for the spiritual guidance of the Catholic Church. De Smet also supposedly became among the first non-Indians to see the Great Salt Lake of Utah, and on a return trip to the Midwest in 1846 he apparently encountered Brigham Young and informed him of the location of the Mormons' Zion. St. Mary's remained in continuous operation for the next nine years. The mission gained a reportedly large number of converts from amongst Flatheads living in the valley, among the most significant of these converts were three of the most influential Flathead headman. Chief Big Face, who according to the Jesuits was the head chief of the Flatheads at the time of their arrival, took the baptismal name of Paul. A second Flathead chief, Three Eagles, also converted in 1841, becoming known to the priests and other whites in Montana as Chief Loyola. Three Eagles' son, Little Bear Claw or Many Horses, took the baptismal name of Victor, and he ascended to the position of the Flathead's head chief in late 1841 when Paul died, likely due to exposure to a disease that the Jesuits had brought with them.

St. Mary's expanded in 1845, with the arrival of another Italian Jesuit, Anthony Ravalli. Furthermore, Fr. Point, expanded the scope of St. Mary's Mission to include the Piegan Blackfeet who intermittently visited the Bitterroot Valley. In 1847, Point attempted to approach the Piegans about the prospects of another mission east of the mountains. On his trip, Point reported that he had successfully converted about 700 Piegans, and that he had received assurances from Piegan headman - perhaps the same

headman who negotiated with Isaac Stevens and the American treaty commission in 1855 - that Jesuits would be welcome back into their territory. None of this evangelical “prospecting,” however, ever bore any fruit. Though by all indications the Blackfeet and Flatheads had achieved a tenuous peace in the 1840s, as this would explain the visitation of St. Mary’s by Piegans, whatever arrangement that had existed disintegrated by the end of the decade. Renewed bouts of violence between Flatheads and Blackfeet, particularly in the Bitterroot Valley, prompted the Jesuits to abandon their mission site in 1850, and sell it to John Owen, a former American Fur Company man who converted St. Mary’s into a fort. Jesuits relocated their activities further into the mountains, at missions among the Coeur d’Alene Indians of modern Idaho, and did not return to the Flatheads for another four years, and did not return to the Bitterroot Valley until sixteen years later.²⁴

While Catholics claimed wide early successes among the Flatheads, it is difficult to in fact gauge just how much of an impression the Jesuits left. Whether headmen like Paul, Loyola, or Victor actually experienced deep conversion experiences, or simply accepted baptism and Christian names as a political expediency is impossible to determine for certain, but the truth likely lies in a mixture of each alternative. Given that the threat of violence forced Catholics to abandon their earliest efforts in the Northwest, this suggests a tempered reading of their early successes. It further forces us into a

²⁴ C.S. Jones, Indian Agent to the Confederated Salish and Kootenais from 1871-1872, discusses Father Point’s exploits among the Blackfeet, see., C.S. Jones, “Flathead Indian Agency,” in *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1872*, 280-282. Furthermore, a brief history of the exploits of the priests at St. Mary’s is provided in a letter from BCIM Commissioner Charles Ewing to Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano. Letter: Charles Ewing to Columbus Delano, Washington, D.C., January 15, 1874. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 1. Marquette University Archives. Also, Suzanne, H. Schrems, *Uncommon Women, Unmarked Trails: The Courageous Journey of Catholic Missionary Sisters in Frontier Montana* (Norman, OK: Horse Creek Publications, 2003), 24-49. Also, Robert J. Bigart, *Life and Death at St. Mary’s Mission: Births, Marriages, Deaths, and Survival Among the Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1866-1891* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 2005).

consideration of the perilous and tenuous nature of “frontier evangelizing,” which was often a fraught and sometimes deadly encounter between disparate and opposing cultural worlds. Fantastic romances about missionaries and their “frontier” encounters or their “going native” sympathies for noble savagery, and - conversely - simplistic bromides about cultural imperialism both, more often than not, fail to stand up to careful examination.

The ideologies and mindsets which drove Jesuits differed greatly from those held by Presbyterian and other Protestant organizations like the Board of Foreign Missions. In the deeper recesses of the Order’s and of Catholic history, there existed a tendency to infantilize and sympathize with Indians, and to see an innocence in their state of “savagery,” as opposed to the distinctly more Protestant and Puritan tendency to view people in a native state as “heathen,” and therefore either unclean or even evil. Such an ideology is clearly visible through the writings of sixteenth-century Dominican Bartolome De Las Casas, who mourned the destruction of Caribbean natives at the hands of the Spanish Empire in his infamous *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. A similar strain of thought continued on in the Catholic world, and can certainly be found in the enlightenment philosophy of figures like Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Looking to less remote historical factors, historian John Dichtl has convincingly demonstrated how Catholics in the early United States regarded the American West as a land of opportunity, and a place to spread their faith and communities away from the entrenched Methodist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian communities of the East. Beyond this, American Catholics tapped into the fervor of Romanticism and Transcendentalism, taking it upon themselves to construct a “holy community” in the western wilderness.

Thus, from even the earliest stages of its westward movement, Catholics gained a broad appeal among westward settlers, many of whom were immigrants from Catholic regions of Central Europe and the British Isles, and thus outsiders to the United States' Protestant-dominated cultural hegemony. Thus, Catholics quickly established strong enclaves in the early- nineteenth century's frontier cities, like St. Louis and Cincinnati, which were based upon the ethnic plurality of these municipalities' immigrant populations. Considering the course and motives of the Catholic Church in the early American West, it was hardly a surprising move for Catholic clergy and Catholic missionaries to extend their reaches. As the nineteenth century wore on, the church courted the large Hispanic communities absorbed by the Texas Annexation and Mexican Cession, the flood of Asian immigrants pouring into California following the Civil War, and renewed commitments to Native Americans, who were already long term targets of Catholic Missionaries. And even as parish communities, and rank-and-file Catholics, hardened into strict parish enclaves, the American Catholic Hierarchy still held little problem with embracing plurality in a society where Catholics were largely regarded as outsiders anyway.²⁵

While missionaries attempted to permanently implant themselves into native societies they often faced a level of difficulty never encountered by traders. The cliché that peace and harmony between whites and Indians always went out the window as soon as missionaries arrived is at least somewhat accurate. While traders sought to at least

²⁵ For an overview of Bartolome De Las Casas, and the attitudes of other Catholics in the early Americas toward indigenous peoples, see: Daniel Castro, *Another Face of Empire: Bartolome De Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). On Catholics in the Early West, see John R. Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith: Bringing Catholicism to the West in the Early Republic* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008). Also, Anne M. Butler, *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

superficially place themselves in native kin networks, for the purposes of trust and efficiency, they had no interest in changing native societies. Rather, they merely sought to exploit natives for profit (and vice versa, Indians no doubt thought they were exploiting strangers for the same purpose). Economic exchange required but a bare minimum of cross-cultural understanding so long as both parties contently believed he or she was getting a good deal. Evangelization, on the other hand, was an exchange that struck chords on far more deeply ingrained cultural levels, which often made many Indian peoples resistant, if not straightforwardly hostile to alien moralizers' attempts to restructure the patterns of their daily life.²⁶

In general, missionaries of all stripes met with mixed results and few demonstrative early successes in bringing their faith to natives. Numbers of converts are entirely impossible to confirm, and no doubt actual figures of legitimate conversions were substantially fewer than reported. Generally, Protestants, Mormons, and Catholics alike recorded baptisms as conversion experiences, which, to be fair, was the best quantitative metric available to them, even if it was an unreliable and insufficient method of compiling statistics. As suggested by historian James Sandos, however, baptism rarely equated to full conversion. Beyond that, in numerous instances mission activity, which included the transmission of language, gave disparate Native Peoples a common communicative framework through which they could more unitedly and effectively resist missionaries. Examples of this phenomenon were found quite commonly throughout the West, with the prime example being the Pueblo Revolt in seventeenth-century New

²⁶ James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Also, James Axtell remains among the foremost authorities on early Indian and missionary exchanges. Although his positions are not always consistent, he has argued that the clash of cultures between Indians and missionaries often times disrupted more peaceful, and purely commercial relationships between Native Peoples and Americans or Europeans. See, James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Mexico. The greatest barrier to successful mission activity, which few if any non-Indians even remotely understood, was that Christian civilization and theology cut against the very grain of most Native cultures in general and of virtually all Northwest Indian societies specifically.²⁷

There were numerous cultural barriers, the most significant being the diametrically opposed manners in which Christian and Northwest Indian peoples organized the gendered structure of their societies. Euro-Christian cultures tended toward patriarchal societal constructions, meaning their marital and sexual morals and mores revolved almost entirely around the rights of men. Men served as heads of households, meaning they controlled “mutually owned” property (mutually owned in the loosest sense of the phrase), controlled legal rights to offspring, and controlled both the terms of entrance into and exit from matrimony. Nez Perces, Flatheads, Blackfeet, and their neighbors, on the other hand, operated largely matrilineally. Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet women controlled the terms of their relationships. Since belonging and kinship ran through the descent lines of women, it, for the most part, did not matter at all who a child’s father was when establishing kinship and band status. Women could dissolve a marriage without much required pomp and circumstance if their partner lost face, lost the economic ability to support his kin, or proved unable to produce children. It was not uncommon for many Indian women to take numerous husbands over the course of their reproductive life spans, which Europeans more often than not misunderstood as adultery or promiscuity – a point of view that was undergirded by prevalent eighteenth and

²⁷ Sandos’ ethnohistory reexamines the relationships between Indians and Franciscans in California and attempts to steer a path between a narrative that promotes Indian resistance or wholly blames missionaries for cultural disintegration. Instead, he argues that Indians often interacted with the faith that Franciscans tried to spread in unpredictable and unintended ways. See, James Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

nineteenth century racial assumptions about Indian women's sexuality – and non-Indians attempted to punish this, with little success. Moreover, American missionary's discomfort with the concept of miscegenation, a trait about which their trader counterparts held no similar qualms, blocked their ability to understand most Indian peoples' usage of intertribal and interracial marriage and sex in politics, as a means of cementing peace and alliances by mingling kinship networks. Also misunderstood at the time, was that widespread Indian practices of cross-tribal marriages and intercourse healthily varied genetic pools. Some modern evolutionary psychologists argue that commonplace "miscegenation" developed in a widespread fashion through many kin and clan based cultures as a subconscious mechanism meant to discourage occurrences of debilitating recessive traits amongst otherwise isolated lines of genealogical inheritance.²⁸

Beyond the overarching difficulties missionaries faced, theological peculiarities amongst the various religious orders created more specific possibilities and limitations. Protestant missionaries in the early Northwest tended to work out of small outposts, manned by a single minister and his family. Carrying clear roots even back into the eighteenth century and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, though, American Protestants adhered to a tradition of conversion that was deeply tied to contemplation of Biblical text, and specifically to the laws of the Torah or Pentateuch and the gospels and

²⁸ Western-Civilization-Oriented notions of gender, and specifically of "femininity" and "domesticity," conflicted very frequently with indigenous, non-Western, constructions of gendered labor and morality, not only in the American West, but around the world. See, Maina Cawla Singh, ed., *Gender, Religion, and the "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia, 1860s-1940s* (New York: Routledge, 2013). Also, Martha Elizabeth Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: NYU Press, 1999). Also, for a comprehensive overview on the tendency of sub-chieftdom-level indigenous cultures north of the Rio Grande River to adopt extremely complex gendered systems of labor and social interaction, see, Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998). Also, Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000).

letters of the Apostles. Native literacy, then, arose as a fundamental thrust of Protestant activity, even into the nineteenth century. Protestants also often sought further to discourage the practice of indigenous rituals, since with almost virtual unanimity, Protestant ministers tended to find dances, ceremonies, and other heavily symbolized forms of ritual as entirely alien to their own understandings of the divine. Protestants also, far more ardently than Catholics, sought to achieve a radical reorientation of their congregation's social, gendered, and moral constructions, seeking to bring natives into their own tempered, conservative, and Victorian notions of conduct, virtue, and sexuality. Such an approach created numerous and mounting obstacles for Protestant missionaries in the Northwest, where the wide cultural gulf between themselves and indigenous cultures could often overpower the attention span of native curiosities.²⁹

Mormons also achieved only limited success in their efforts with the Indians of the Northwest. After 1860, they maintained a mission only amongst the Nez Perces, as their attempts at sending missionaries to the Flatheads and Blackfeet had already resoundingly failed. Mormons came to be driven to seek Indian converts in the West by a combination of their own outsider status within American society (similar to Catholics) but also by their own theological interest in the origins of America's indigenous population. Whatever kinship the Latter-Day Saints might have felt toward their native counterparts, however, was rarely if at all reciprocated. Most native groups found

²⁹ While American and Canadian Protestants never fully rejected the concept of a state of "noble savagery," at the same time, they never embraced it with the same inflection of "infantilization" as Catholic missionaries. As Protestant missionary experiences with North American Natives broadened over the course of the nineteenth century most of the national organizations, like the Board of Foreign Missions adopted an ideology which held that Indians existed in a naturally wretched state, but could be redeemed through a radical reconstruction of their societies, in the image of conservative, Victorian, American molds of family, community, and economy. See, C.L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

Mormon beliefs about Indian origins to be ludicrous, bordering on insane. Furthermore, the racialized hierarchy of the nineteenth-century Mormon Church completely discouraged Indian participation, since natives' status as Lamanites, descendants of the brothers Laman and Lemuel who rebelled against the Nephites (the Lost Tribe of Mormon Theology), barred them from full membership in the church. What little success Mormons found in gaining influence amongst Northwest Indians came through their economic interactions with natives. Mormon traders gained a well-earned reputation for their fairness and honesty among the Nez Perces, Flatheads, and Blackfeet alike, winning Mormon traders an unprecedented level of tribal trust for businessmen who refused to take an Indian wife. Moreover, Mormons general distrust of non-Indian "gentiles" motivated them to often forcefully and sometimes violently chase away inequitable grifters and opportunistic liquor-dealers, which gained the Latter-Day Saints a considerable level of gratitude and respect from indigenous leaders.³⁰

Relatively-speaking, Jesuit missionaries faced far fewer obstacles in attempting to relay the tenets of their faith and morality to Northwest Natives. Partly, this was rooted in some important ecclesiastical distinctions between Protestant and Catholic religious practice. Whereas much of Protestant religious life revolved around Biblical text, Catholic religious practice centered more on ritual and symbol. Heavy use of iconography, and the Catholic tendency to pattern its worship around the practice of the sacraments, gave the religion numerous elements that were at least somewhat familiar to Indian systems of interaction with the supernatural. These cross-cultural similarities were

³⁰ For a broad overview of Mormon racial conceptualization, and also how Mormonism, itself, came to be "racialized" by American Protestants: see, W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). A broader overview of Mormon history: see, Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

a lucky historical happenstance, predicated on the fact that for much its existence the Catholic faith was designed to cater to a largely illiterate laity.³¹

More specifically, Jesuits benefitted from a long history of trial and error learning to communicate with non-Western and non-Christian cultures. By the time that Jesuits reached the Northwest in the 1840s, the order already had 300 years of experience in communicating their faith to alien cultures. Unlike the methods of American Protestant Preachers, which were largely bottom-up in their orientation, Jesuits took a top-down approach to evangelization, focusing their initial efforts on converting influential chiefs, elder women, and warriors, knowing their influence would help spread Catholicism further down the hierarchy of Indian societies. Furthermore, before going after converts, Jesuits most often made good-faith efforts to understand the mechanics of the societies in which they resided. Thus, once actual missionary activity commenced, Jesuits usually did their best to explain Catholic tenets in terms that would be culturally recognizable to indigenous societies. Often times, this meant that nineteenth-century Jesuits downplayed the themes of judgment and damnation – which dominated American Protestant preaching, and almost uniformly flopped with native audiences – in favor of themes of revelation and salvation. Salvation-through-faith-and-sacrament theology, in particular, gained an increasing appeal with Indians of the Northwest as the nineteenth century wore on, and as dependence on manufactured goods, diseases, warfare, and cultural dissolution took their toll on Indian societies. As with all other missionary efforts, however, the Jesuits teachings were subject to constant misinterpretations. Native Peoples often

³¹ Christopher Vecsey has continually and convincingly argued for a deep seated common ground between indigenous and Catholic spiritual practices on the basis of marking milestones of the annual calendar, of the stages of life, growth, and development, and on the renewal of spiritual commitment with the use of ritualized community practices: see, Christopher Vecsey, *Where Two Roads Meet* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

adapted Catholic teachings to their own systems of religion, rather than fully “converting” to Catholicism.³²

Jesuits also almost universally worked in conjunction with orders of Catholic Sisters. This meant that Catholic missionaries to the Nez Perces, Blackfeet, and Flatheads offered an unparalleled level of social service to their subjects. More than intently focusing on winning souls for Christ, Catholics attempted to integrate themselves more broadly into the structure of Indian societies, offering medical care, education, food, and labor. This made Catholic entrance into Native life in the Northwest far more subtle than the impositions of their counterparts. Finally, whereas Protestant missionary families tended to remain independent from their congregational charges, and modeled the values and morals they tried to impart, Catholics more generally tended to try and place the structure of their missions and parishes within the community structure of their congregations. Priests took on paternal roles as spiritual fathers for their communities involving themselves in matters that concerned the mission and the entire congregation more generally. Likewise, Catholic sisters took on maternal roles as caregivers, midwives, and community servants. Catholics, by and large, worked within a community family structure, a set of informal networks that set individual native family structures

³² Once seen as a tightly organized, quasi-military machine, in more recent studies the Jesuit order has instead come to be viewed as a highly flexible and loosely organized global mission effort, that succeeded in reproducing successful evangelical techniques, through the utilization of indigenous societies’ own hierarchies. See, Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Even after the recreation of the order in the nineteenth century, Jesuits continually found guidance from the knowledge gained in the deeper recesses of their orders’ history, and re-applied and adapted these strategies in the nineteenth century, with a renewed emphasis on education, and a well-spring of knowledge and influence that came from the universities they established and grew. Their universities furthermore, came to serve as a ground of recruitment for supporters and allies. See, Gerald McKevitt, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the West, 1848-1919* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

within the larger apparatus of the church or parish family, and which strived for the success, protection, and common good of the broader “family of faith.”³³

Thus, even before the federal government became deeply involved in terraforming the political landscape of the Northwest, an incipient religious structure was already in place. It was a vast and diverse array of religious communities and families. Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons all sought to bring Native Peoples into the fold of their socio-religious world views and communities, and did so with varying levels of (albeit limited) success. Even, so, thousands of Native Americans in the Northwest remained independent and far flung from the religious moralizers who had entered and attempted to restructure their worlds. The sweeping changes brought about by American expansion, however, closed these early “frontiers of faith” and swept Americans, Indians, and the religious into an increasingly interactive world.³⁴

The “Great Father” returned to the Indians of the Northwest in the 1850s, five decades after “his” first appearance. Only by this time, the “Great Father’s” attitude and approach to Indian relations had undergone a significant facelift. In the early-nineteenth century, Captains Lewis and Clark had been empowered as individual agents to negotiate,

³³ A report released by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, showed a remarkable level of cognizance for past mistakes and wrongs, while still offering incredible insight into how Catholics perceived and still viewed their purpose and methods among Indians, wherein it was strongly stated that Catholics sought to bring Native Americans into the broader parish, diocesan, and church family. See, William P. Fay, et. al., *Native American Catholics at the Millennium: A Report on a Survey by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee on Native American Catholics* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002).

³⁴ Ross Alexander Enochs’ study of the St. Francis mission among the Lakota traces patterns of Jesuit and Catholic mission methods, and draws out a strong example of how Catholic missions establish a “familial superstructure” which placed Indians inside the context of a religious “family.” See, Ross Alexander Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux: Pastoral Theology and Ministry, 1886-1945* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996). Also, Anne M. Butler delves into the various, widespread, and often unheralded social and religious functions served by Catholic sisters who worked with Jesuits and other orders of priests in the Western missions. See, Anne M. Butler, *Across God’s Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

treat, and counsel with North America's native population in any manner they deemed reasonable and necessary. By and large this approach ended up being a smashing Indian relations success with most of the people Lewis and Clark encountered, but it was derived purely by accident. To some extent the latitude given to early Indian agents stemmed from the fact that Thomas Jefferson and his immediate successors in the presidency knew next to nothing about how to deal with Indian peoples of the trans-Missouri West. Beyond that, the early United States had no formalized bureaucracy for dealing with Indians. Rather, interactions between Americans and natives were loosely governed by a series of Trade and Intercourse Acts, that more than anything else regulated economic exchange by demanding that would-be Indian traders receive territorial or state licenses. The primary idea behind licensure of traders was to ensure that Native Peoples were dealt with in a fair and equitable manner in order to help maintain peace and stability on the frontier.

The drawback, of course, to this very loose system of governance was that the tone and manner of America's treating with Indians entirely depended upon the temperaments and attitudes of individual frontier agents and governors. At the same time, as argued rather convincingly by Francis Paul Prucha and Donald Fixico, early American political culture, wrapped up in the romanticism of westward movement, grew to be dominated by a zeal for fighting Indians. Thus, more often than not a man's worth and qualification for national and state office came to generally be measured by his frontier exploits. The glorification, and political empowerment, of Indian fighters like Andrew

Jackson, William Henry Harrison, and Zachary Taylor institutionalized a violent and domineering culture in America's incipient Indian bureaucracy.³⁵

Thus, even though the Office of Indian Affairs was formally brought together as a federal bureaucracy under the direction of an ardent pacifist and Quaker, Thomas McKenney, who served as the Superintendent of the Bureau from 1824-1830, it was placed within the War Department and largely staffed by military officers. The initial task given to the OIA by the federal government was to secure the terms of Indian removal from the Northeast and Southeast. Even McKenney bought into this plan, so long as he could achieve it on his own terms. McKenney hired hundreds of Quaker negotiators to treat with eastern Indians in hopes of persuading them that removal was in both party's best interest. McKenney held a flawed but sincere belief that removal was truly the most humane course of Indian governance, since it would move native populations beyond the scope of the bloodthirsty cutthroats that ran the War Department and the President's Mansion.

Unfortunately, McKenney's well-intentioned pleading produced few results. He stayed on with the OIA after the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, despite his misgivings about the General and former Military Governor of Florida. The passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, however, prompted Jackson to remove McKenney from office, on the grounds that the president found him to be too sympathetic to Native Peoples, and not ruthless enough to carry out the removal program the president envisioned. And while the Cherokees under the leadership of John Ross and other tribes were able to successfully tie the removal issue up in the courts for the better part of the

³⁵ See, Donald Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012). See Also, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, Vols. 1 & 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

1830s, coercion and violence coming from both the federal army and the state militias ultimately forced the Indian peoples of the eastern United States into exile beyond the Mississippi River by the middle of the 1840s.³⁶

By 1840 America's "Indian Question" and the mission of the Office of Indian Affairs appeared to be all but resolved. The majority of the nation's indigenous population was either already removed or in the process of being transferred beyond the normal scope and bounds of American life. With the issue of Texas Annexation being pronounced dead on arrival due to the "Slavery Question" shortly after the Texians' revolt in 1836, and with continued interest in the Louisiana Purchase being most aptly described as "incoherent at best," it seemed many Americans were content to forestall further movement beyond the "Permanent Indian Frontier." The emergence of Whig politics in the late 1830s seemed to underscore this new national mood. All of this suddenly fell apart, though, in a few short months in the fall of 1844 when James K. Polk, an understated Tennessee Democrat being groomed for national office by Andrew Jackson, won a resounding electoral victory on the platform of "Oregon, Texas, and California."

Politically hampered by an overwhelming Democratic mandate, John Tyler, in the closing hours of his presidency, went against his own Whig Party's stance and accepted Texas into the union, putting the United States and Mexico on a collision course for war. Entering office, and going against the misgivings of his ambitious, if nervous and fidgety,

³⁶ Herman Viola has presented us with an excellent profile of the Office of Indian Affairs' first commissioner. See, Herman Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (New York: Sage Books, 1974). Additionally, Robert V. Remini, Ronald Satz, and Anthony F.C. Wallace, have produced masterful analyses on the impact of Jacksonianism on American-Indian relations. See, Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974). Also, Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1993). Also, Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

Secretary of State, James Buchanan, Polk called Lord Palmerston's bluff on Britain's willingness to fight over Oregon. By 1849, Polk acquired nearly all the modern territorial limits of the contiguous United States (save for the Gadsden Purchase). His actions once more threw wide open the question of the relationship between Americans and all of the Indian peoples who resided west of Mississippi, now living indisputably (from a legalistic non-native perspective) on American soil.³⁷

In the final days of Polk's presidency, he placed all of Oregon, Louisiana, and the Mexican Cession under the direct possession of the federal government, more than doubling the size of the public domain in the United States. To manage this massive new acquisition Polk created a new cabinet bureaucracy, the Department of the Interior, which absorbed the General Land Office and the Office Indian Affairs and was assigned with the task of preparing newly acquired lands for organization, territorialization, and settlement. Implicitly, this also meant that the department would have to negotiate or dictate the terms of Indian and non-Indian coexistence in the West.

The new problem facing the Office of Indian Affairs was that further removal beyond a permanent frontier was now impossible. With gold bringing tens of thousands of people into California within a few months in 1848-1849, and with settlers scrambling to the Willamette Valley in modern Oregon, the intention of Americans to spread over the continent to the Pacific was clear. The main thrust of Bureau activity, then, moved into an effort to win land cessions by treaty, in order to secure rights of way for westward moving settlers, and then coordinate with the War Department to set up and maintain forts along the overland trails to guard settlers and enforce treaties. Through the 1850s,

³⁷ For a good profile of Polk and his ambitions, see, Thomas M. Leonard, *James K. Polk: A Clear and Present Destiny* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). Also see, Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013).

60s, and 70s, this treaty system evolved toward the creation of permanent reserves, territories that would “remain” in Indian hands (in reality they would be managed by the federal government for the benefit of tribes) and be closed to most forms of non-Indian encroachment.

The treaty system already possesses a fairly negative reputation in American history; however, Francis Paul Prucha, Donald Fixico, and other historians of the Bureau of Indian Affairs have brought to light convincing evidence that few if any Indian commissioners, agents, or military officers ever entered into negotiations with evil intentions. The overriding goal of the OIA was to maintain the peace between American settlers and independent extralegal groups of people who were considered to be beyond the normal scope of the law. The numerous problems with the treaty system mostly stemmed from communicative, cultural, and psychological differences between natives and Americans that went unnoticed and would have been impossible to rectify at the time.³⁸

The most obvious and basic problem that plagued treaty negotiations was communication. The fact that treaties themselves were the product of a legalized and bureaucratized society with a developed notion of binding contractual agreement, something that had no parallel in nearly all native North American societies, further compounded the problem. The chiefs and warriors who affixed their marks to almost all of the hundreds of treaties that were signed between 1850 and 1880 usually did not understand the full terms of the agreements they were making. By and large, many native negotiators were more interested in what concessions they were receiving than what had

³⁸ See, Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). Also, Donald Fixico, *The Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012).

to be given up. Furthermore, few if any Native American leaders understood that they would be responsible for ensuring that everyone on their end lived up to the terms of the treaty.

Assumptions about the other, which both parties carried, only further muddled the waters of understanding. The OIA assumed that chiefs and warriors had the power to command their people to follow the terms of treaties, they did not. On the other side of the coin, many Indian peoples assumed that their agreements with officials from the United States would work in a similar fashion to the alliances, agreements, and councils that native groups held with one another. On the face of it, they had no reason to think that would not be the case. Among virtually all of the trans-Missouri Indian peoples, treating with foreigners was a drawn out and ritualized process. Groups expected that the terms of their agreements would organically change over time as their alliances were frequently renewed, most often by the exchange of gifts, exchange in captives (numerous plains bands maintained peace with one another by trading willing “hostages” to cohabitate with other bands), dances, councils, and ceremonies. No one living on the plains or in the mountains ever expected to be disallowed from changing the terms of their agreement by a piece of paper.³⁹

Both sides frequently broke treaties, then, because they often caused more problems than they solved. Americans mistook attacks and raids on the overland trails as betrayal, not understanding that the chiefs that had signed the treaties lacked the power or influence to restrain anyone outside their immediate kin group. Furthermore, chiefs could always lose their prestige and influence, and newly rising leaders would have had no

³⁹ A lack of cross-cultural understanding, which lead to numerous expectations - held by Americans and Indians alike - being frequently dashed. See, Frederick Hoxie, Peter C. Mancall, and James H. Merrell, *American Nations: Encounters in Indian Country, 1850 to Present* (New York: Psychology Press, 2001).

reason to feel bound by the previous chief's agreements. Meanwhile, many Indians frequently returned to the forts seeking to renew their agreements, which most often meant that they wanted further gifts and cessions to grease the wheels. When and if Americans refused to offer further gifts, Indians more often than not assumed that meant their compact had been effectively dissolved. These cultural gulfs, which were never adequately bridged, made the treaty system a complete debacle.⁴⁰

The process of confinement for northern natives started in 1851, when the Grand Army of The West called together a multi-tribe council at Fort Laramie, in modern Wyoming, in September 1851. Though delegates from all of the plains tribes were invited, few attended. Nonetheless, the OIA negotiated a treaty that nominally secured a right of way for American migrants between the Missouri and Arkansas Rivers. Delegates from bands of the Northern Cheyenne, Sioux, Crow, Assiniboine, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara peoples signed the treaty on September 17th, which was ratified by congress, who agreed to compensate the signees with ten years of "annuity payments" (which in reality were mostly used to pay-off outstanding debts between Indians and licensed traders). The treaty quickly broke down, however, because it was impossible to enforce (it was not possible to prevent immigrants from wandering beyond ceded lands, and not possible to prevent Indians from continuing to use the ceded lands), and it was next to impossible to guarantee and organize compensation to Indians for their lands.⁴¹

The Fort Laramie agreement completely expired in 1854, when the "Grattan Massacre," so-called by the American press, of the summer of 1854 brought about a state

⁴⁰ See, Donald Fixico, ed., *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007).

⁴¹ For an overview of the Fort Laramie proceedings, see, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 3rd. Edition (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 83-91.

of general warfare between the United States and Indians of the Powder River Country in modern Montana and Wyoming. The messy situation on the plains was accompanied by an equally perilous set of circumstances in the Northwest. At least since 1847 the Cayuses, Walla Walla, Yakimas, and the Nez Perces had been at war with one another and at war with the stream of American settlers flooding into the region. Though all of these wars and conflicts had their own igniting factors, the more general cause of violence can be summed up as an utter failure of the “Permanent Indian Frontier,” that Whiggish idea from the pre-Mexican American War period that held that the United States would develop slowly west, and that the lands beyond the Mississippi River would remain both “wild” and under Indians’ control.⁴²

The American drive to push across the continent, which at points throughout history has been alternatively referred to as “Manifest Destiny” or America’s “frontier spirit” ignited a cataclysm that utterly smashed the familiar world of North America’s western Indian peoples that they had known since the opening of the Spanish Frontier and the entrance of horses. It was a world that, for a time, greatly enriched Indian peoples and broadly opened their economic horizons to new possibilities of trade, conquest, and the domination of nature. It was a world, though too, that bore with it the seeds of its own destruction, bringing about dependency on trade items that Indians came to prefer but could not produce or replace for themselves, bringing diseases, and bringing about a shift

⁴² For an overview of the Grattan Massacre, and the breakdown of the “Permanent Indian Frontier,” see, Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

of Indian productive strategies that were narrower - and thus more vulnerable to disaster - in their scope.⁴³

The American settlement of the West was above all else a violent, destructive, and often depraved enterprise, largely bereft of the romanticism with which Frederick Jackson Turner and his pupils wanted to imbue it. Ideologically, culturally, and spiritually, Americans saw the West as a wilderness that was meant to be tamed and civilized, and they did not, nor - arguably - could not recognize the constellation of native civilizations that would be disrupted in the process. For the Americans that endeavored to cross the great western wilderness its native inhabitants were indistinguishable from the myriad other natural obstacles that they believed stood in their way: the harshness of the arid plains and the extremities of its climate, the towering and seemingly insurmountable Rockies, the powerful rivers that seemed to defy control and manipulation, and the dangerous and sometimes exotic wildlife, all these things and Indians contributed to an imagination of the American West that persists even to this day in American culture and society.⁴⁴

While many Native Peoples saw, and continued to see, Americans as allies, economic opportunities, and even friends, increasingly so, they also saw the wave of immigrants flooding over the trails as an unstoppable and unwelcome pestilence. And one that they increasingly saw as insurmountable in its strength and voracity. What Americans only recognized as a boundless wilderness was in fact a complex patchwork

⁴³ On the ultimate costs and consequences of trade between Americans and Indians, see, Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Two excellent overviews on the debate of the costs and consequences of the Westward Movement, see, Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987). Also, Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

of tribal grounds - pastures, foraging and horticultural sites, hunting ranges, game trails, and spiritual locations - all governed by system of politics and interactions as old as the human presence in the Americas itself. In a quite literal sense Americans pasted their own world in the American West over the one that had already existed. This process started with the simple renaming of geographic features and landmarks, a seemingly insignificant act that in and of itself represented the monumental social, civilizational, and historic shift taking place in the nineteenth century. American explorers like Lewis and Clark renamed parts of Indian Country after girlfriends and statesman - for example, renaming the rivers that form the source of the Missouri River, which the Piegans saw as the headwaters of their very domain, after Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Albert Gallatin. Missionaries renamed landmarks as well, but even went so far as to rename the people whom they encountered and converted.

What followed was a complete political re-imagining of the western Indians' worlds. Americans drew broad political boundaries that organized the West into territories, counties, and states. Americans surveyed railroad routes that were often paved over courses of the overland trails, which themselves had often been pasted over Indians' own game trails and migratory routes. Americans further applied a surveying grid to the West, and began to both imaginarily and concretely carve the world of the Indian West up into sections, quarter sections, and 40 acre plots, assigned as homesteads, town sites, or public lands. Americans planned and implemented a future for the American West that in nearly every way conflicted with the fluid nature by which Native Peoples had governed and utilized their domains. Native Peoples' worlds had been regulated according to cyclical patterns of climate and life, moving seasonally to exploit hunting

opportunities, foraging seasons, and the movement of fish in the rivers. Their lives demanded mobility and impermanence. Americans, by contrast, sought to put the West to the plough, and to re-engineer the American West to the needs of intensive agriculture, which meant controlling the region's rivers, and diverting their waters for the purpose of growing food. This meant cutting down forests to supply building materials, and this meant delving beneath the West to draw a means of living from the minerals in the earth. It quickly became evident that the two worlds could not comfortably coexist.⁴⁵

This brought Americans and Indians into bloody confrontation for the sake of their competing visions for the places that they called rightly theirs. As pointed out by historian Ned Blackhawk, this was a barbaric and desperate exchange, in which both Native Peoples and Americans attempted to dehumanize their opponents, and committed horrid atrocities in the names of freedom and progress. Native warriors assaulted wagon trains and homestead sites, slaughtering people wholesale, or sometimes dragging them off into captivity for the purpose of ransom. By contrast, United States Army regulars, and especially militias, attacked Native Peoples indiscriminately, killing entire camps of people and often slaughtering the elderly, women, and children. The utilization of terror more or less stood as the United States' unofficial policy in dealing with its aboriginal population, and what could not be gained through negotiation and threat would be seized by the sword.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ An excellent application of French theorist Michel Foucault's theory of competing imaginations in shared space can be found in Elliott West's study of the Cheyennes. See, Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

⁴⁶ Ned Blackhawk's rather convincing argued volume, suggests that contact between Americans and Indians in the West was, above all else, a profoundly violent experience. See, Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006).

As we step back and take a *longue duree* glance at the development of the North American West, and at the Pacific Northwest within that context, we gain greater perspective on the world out of which modern Northwest Native American history developed. Americans disrupted the world that Indians had lived in, but by and large Americans also mistakenly assumed that Native Peoples themselves would fade away with the disappearance of the wilderness and the ascendancy of the American civilization in the West. They rooted this assumption in their belief that Indians were anathema to their own progress and goals. In reality, however, as the older ways of Indian life faded away, a new form of living and economy rose to take its place. Contact and conquest launched a social revolution in Indian country, one that saw Native Peoples both preserve elements of their traditional cultures while simultaneously blending them with newly adopted forms and institutions. The primary struggle for Indigenous Peoples from the late nineteenth century going forward concerned their ability to maintain their sense of selves and sovereignty within the context of a foreign dominant culture, a challenge for which most native individuals rose to the occasion.⁴⁷

This survey of the *longue duree* in the Northwest, however, has also been provided to combat a rising, but erroneous, historical trend that has come to view the processes of contact and conquest as, fundamentally, a sundering of tribal people from an imagined purer context. To assign the value of “purity” to some distant point in the native past, however, is to ignore the dynamism that characterized the entirety of this continent’s First Peoples. Native Peoples invented and reinvented themselves and their societies constantly. The type of fluidity that defined the world of Native Americans is a

⁴⁷ For a further survey of Indian adjustment, see Frederick Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

concept which we, living in a social environment where belonging is tied to legality, borders, and nation-states, often find difficult to understand. For Indians, however, belonging was an entirely interactive experience, based upon relationships which were always subject to change. As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Percés, along with countless other cultural groups, did not arrive here as is from across the Bering Strait. Rather, these groups were inventions, based upon countless other creations and social divisions that preceded them. The ways in which these groups organized themselves and their economies was, furthermore, subject to constant change, and contact with outsiders only accelerated this process, it did not commence it.⁴⁸

The ultimate irony is that our imaginations of a “purer” native context frequently include things such as horses, metals, firearms, and other objects and institutions that were introduced from outside Indians’ worlds. Yet, such things are held apart in a false dichotomy that separates the consequences of material imperialism from that of cultural imperialism: primarily, proselytization and acculturation. The logic that seeks to hold this dichotomy together, in general, argues that the items that Native Americans acquired still stood subject to their own historical agency, as Native Peoples decided how to implement these new goods in their daily lives. Cultural imperialism, on the other hand, acted upon Native Peoples themselves and represented an assault by other historical agents - Americans and Europeans - on Native Peoples’ own social, cultural, and spiritual institutions.

⁴⁸ For a solid overview of the parameters of the debate on whether the American-Indian experience constituted a genocide, See, Benjamin Madley, “Reexamining the American Genocide Debate: Meaning, Historiography, and New Methods,” *The American Historical Review* 120 (2015), 98-139.

What such a dichotomous view of Indians' interactions with outsiders fails to grasp, however, is the reciprocal relationship between items such as metal and horses and cultural imperialism more generally within the totality of the contact experience. Horses and missionaries alike both fundamentally altered the world in which Native Peoples lived, and one could not be accessed without the other. Furthermore, the dichotomy falters against the view of imperialism writ-large as a fundamentally interactive system between the colonizers and the colonized. To be sure, imperialism was and is a system built upon uneven power relationships, but, nonetheless, it was a system under which the colonized were still presented options as to a course of action. Imperialism was an uneven system, not a one-sided one.⁴⁹

Thus, in studying the relationships between Native Peoples and Americans, we cannot separate our understanding of some of contact's consequences from others without doing damage to both. If we restrict our understanding of proselytizing and other forms of cultural exchange simply to "cultural genocide," then we blind ourselves to an entire universe of other considerations, specifically an examination of how and why certain individuals came to accept "Western" lifestyles, capitalism, Christianity, and many of the other institutions spread by America's westward movement, as parts of their own worlds and lives. That they were subsumed by a corrosive and exploitative system entirely outside their control is not a sufficient answer.

If nothing else, the long view of Indian history in the West and in the Northwest suggests that we should not so much look at contact and conquest as a fundamental break

⁴⁹ In the 1980s, a cadre of cultural anthropologists challenged historians to break down traditional views of empire, which primarily only analyzed Europe as the beneficiary of an exploitative and extractive world empire, and to see empire in much more interactive sense. See, Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

between an aboriginal history and a Native American history, but as one more piece in a set of changes and evolutions within the history of this continent's Native Peoples itself. Capitalism and Christianity, in the long view of history, become inseparable from a score of other societal evolutions, and newly introduced institutions that arose throughout native history. Even before Europeans made sustained contact with North America's native inhabitants, their lives had already been surrounded by alien encounters and new influences. New technologies, new forms of organization, and new forms of spirituality spread through the ancient North American world, passing from one group to the next, long before Christianity and capitalism ever arrived on these shores. Native societies had already undergone multiple revolutions diversifying from nomadic bands that hunted megafauna first with spears, and then with bows and atlatls, into a constellation of societies that hunted, farmed, fished, and herded. Furthermore, the diverse array of native spiritual and cosmological systems had already long been shaping and altering the way that Native Peoples understood their universe and their place within it. European introductions simply came to be another shade in that pallet, Europeans did not paint over the entire canvas.

Ultimately Native Peoples found their own path through the imperial system Americans initiated in the West, and they interacted with objects and institutions that Americans introduced on their own terms. And we need to hold on to that insight as we try to place ourselves in the Northwest at the dawn of the reservation era in 1855. It was a critical juncture in American history, where the worlds that the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces had created for themselves collided with the world that Americans intended to create. The force of the impact shattered the world that Native Peoples had known, but

also pulverized Americans' vision for the region which originally had not included Indians at all. Thus, the history that carried forward from that point is fundamentally a story of both Native Peoples and Americans beginning to piece that initial vision - destroyed at contact - back together. The ultimate product, then, contained elements of both imaginations. A compromise between a world that existed and a world that Americans had only ever imagined. As with virtually any other imperial system that has ever existed, the American West came to reflect both the influence of colonizers and the colonized, it produced a region and a society marked by the scars of an unbroken link between its past and present, the consequences of contact and conquest, and the negotiation of two societies with fundamentally opposing worldviews that from 1855 forward were thrust into the common enterprise of coexistence.

Chapter II

The Spirit of 1855: The Stevens Treaties and the Middle Ground

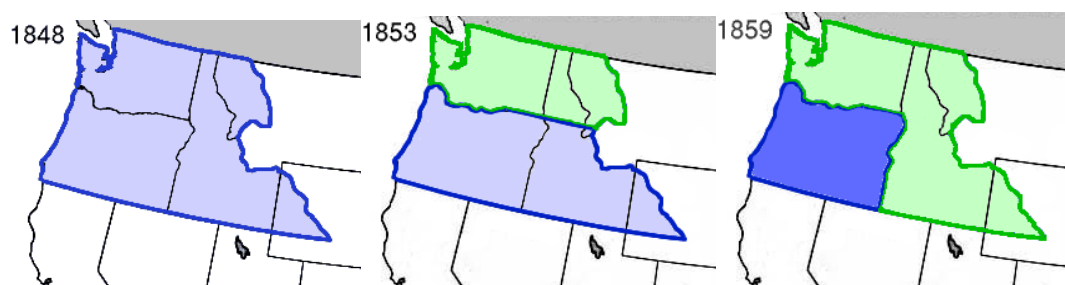
From the perspective of the Americans, between the mid-nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth, the Pacific Northwest evolved from a misshapen and disorganized frontier to a fully integrated component of the nation's continental empire. The Oregon Territory, acquired from Britain via treaty, was formally organized in 1848, though thousands of American settlers already dwelt there, and a steady stream of settlers kept arriving. In 1853, the territory was divided by a line drawn due east from the Columbia River Estuary to the Continental Divide. Congress reorganized the northern lands, lying between the Columbia and the forty-ninth parallel, into the Washington Territory. President Franklin Pierce appointed Isaac Stevens, a Northern Democrat and veteran of the Mexican American War - from the New York Volunteer Infantry - the territory's first military governor. Oregon gained admittance as the thirty-third state on St. Valentine's Day, 1859, with a new eastern boundary drawn at the Snake River. The territorial land ceded by Oregon to the federal government - a large chunk of which became southern Idaho, along with parts of western Montana and Wyoming - was then absorbed into the Washington Territory.¹

During the Civil War, the pace of change quickened. In 1861, the lands in modern Wyoming were transferred to the Nebraska Territory, and in 1863, congress drew a new eastern border for the Washington Territory at the 117th Meridian, reorganizing the lands between that line and the continental divide - Modern Idaho and Western Montana - into

¹ For a more detailed overview of the history of the Oregon and Washington Territories, see, Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 124-142.

the Idaho Territory. Gold strikes made throughout Montana at Last Chance Gulch, Bannack, and Virginia City, in 1863 and 1864, however, brought a stream of new settlers over the Bozeman Trail, and demands of further reorganization. On May 26, 1864, Congress organized the Montana Territory, according to the state's present boundaries, out of lands taken from the Idaho and Dakota Territories. In 1864, Congress also formally funded and organized the Northern Pacific Railway, designed to cut through the entirety of old Washington Country until it reached its terminus at Olympia. The railroad began construction in 1870 under the ownership of Jay Cooke, and later a consortium of rail barons including Frederick Billings, Henry Villard, and James Hill, after the company's bankruptcy in 1875 and reorganization in 1877. It was finally completed in September 1883, just southwest of Missoula, Montana, with the first bridge over the Missouri River and the first train to reach Bozeman Pass arriving the same year.²

Figure 1, The Evolution of Oregon and the Washington Territory³



The drive to encourage settlement, spearheaded by both the railroad and the government, brought the Northwest into full statehood within a few years. Montana's

² See, Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 169-199.

³ Map 1, "The Oregon Territory," GNU Free Documentation License, Wpdms oregon territory 1848.png). Map 2, "Oregon and Washington Territories, 1853," GNU Free Documentation License, Wpdms oregon washington territories 1853.png).

Map 3, "Oregon and the Washington Territory, 1859," GNU Free Documentation License, Wpdms oregon washington territory 1859.png).

first bid at statehood, a convention called by miners in 1866, failed. A second constitutional convention, spearheaded by interests from the Anaconda Copper Company and cattle ranching consortiums, convened in Helena in 1884; Congress finally approved Montana's statehood in February 1889. Washington followed suit the same year, with Idaho gaining statehood a year later after finally resolving disputes with a significant Mormon polygamist interest in and around Boise City. 1893 saw the completion of the region's second transcontinental connection to the east, the Great Northern Railroad built by James Hill, which ran along the northern high lines of Montana, Idaho, and Washington before joining with the Northern Pacific at Seattle. Finally the turn of the twentieth century saw the rise of the region's major population centers at Seattle, Spokane, Boise, and Butte, as well as its integration into the national economy as a center of mining, logging, and industry.⁴

The Native Peoples of the region also experienced a tumultuous set of changes in a time span that witnessed the disappearance of many lifeways they had forged for themselves since the introduction of horses at the opening of the eighteenth century. The influx of settlers, mountain men, and traders along with decades of contact and exchange with agents of the British-controlled Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies briefly opened seemingly limitless new horizons of economic opportunity. The steady flow of American immigration into the region from the 1860s onward, however, quickly confined their existences, and forced them exchange much of the land they had once dominated for assurances of assistance and survival. Whereas Americans saw the Northwest being tamed from a once unwieldy and rugged wilderness to an ordered component of their

⁴ Carlos, Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 200-224.

civilization, Native Peoples witnessed their civilizations being confronted by a chaotic and increasingly unmanageable web of regulations and relationships.⁵

Thus is the duality of the American and Indian experience in the West. Though it is an overstatement to say that the Americans' civilization rose in contrast to Native Peoples' decline, it is certainly true, to at least some extent that the two civilizations deeply conflicted with one another. And yet, despite its best efforts, the American mode of life never completely erased the societies of the Indigenous Peoples that it came to dominate. Though Native Peoples were forced to negotiate away much of their former domains, they still forced a coexistence with Americans through decades of toil, resistance, and even cooperation. This imperfect societal coexistence, forced in spite of the insistences of the American federal government, the states, and their agents, forms the main focus of this study. It is a civilization with a dual identity, baring not all of the marks of the cultures of settlers or the first nations, but qualities of both that evolved, struggled, and even thrived in the midst of this "frontier" and the nation that was carved from it. These "nations within the nation" are the Indian Agencies that still dot its landscape. Far from being relics of our continent's supposed primordial past, they were and still are dynamic communities, larger in their scope than the indigenous tribes that they represented. The interests of a diverse group of people, both from native and non-native descent are and have long been deeply tied to the fate of "Indian Country," and the following pages will flesh out the complex array of Indian County's constituents, lifeways, goals, successes and failures. Modern Native American history cannot be disentangled from the histories of the Americans and immigrants with which Indians so

⁵ For an overview of the confinement process and Indian Wars, see, Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

closely coexisted and often conflicted, and the reservations, their administration, and their histories are the most visible proof of this process.⁶

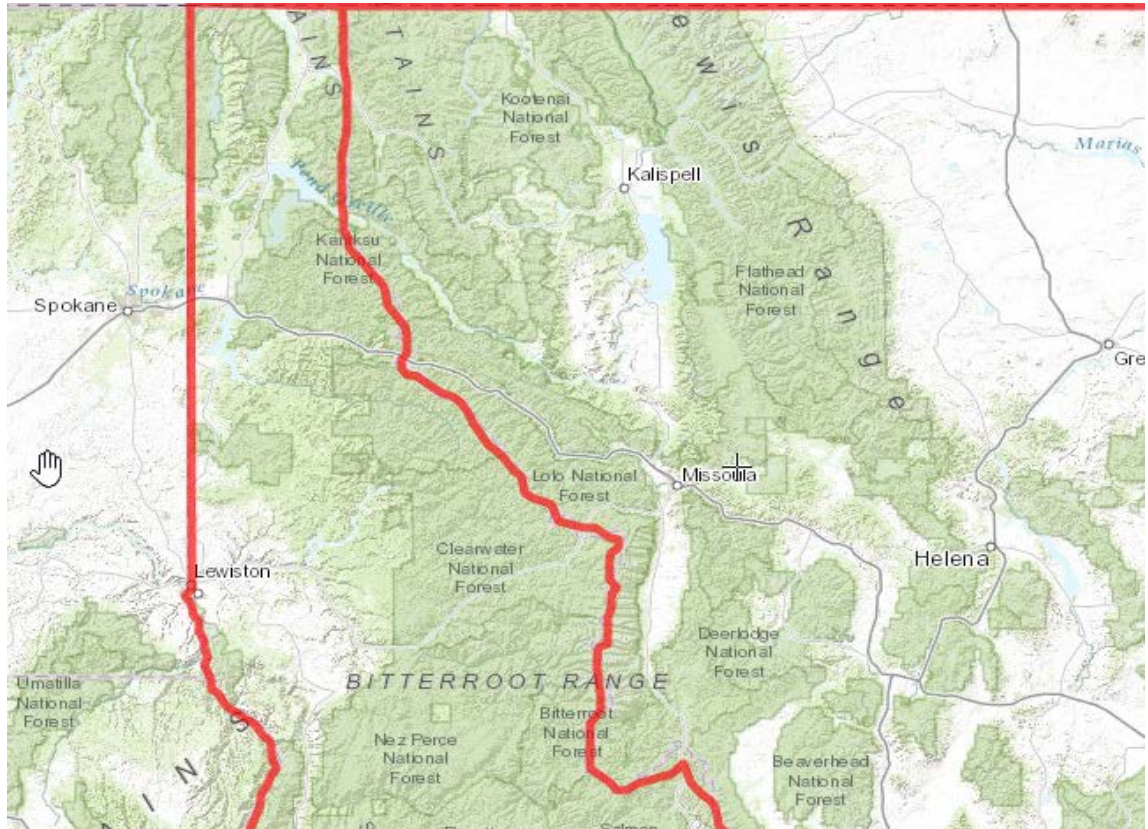
Standing at the cornerstone of this process were the Walla Walla, Hellgate, and Lame Bull treaty councils that General Isaac Stevens convened from May through October 1855. Like the hundreds of treaties signed by Native Peoples in the middle part of the nineteenth century, these treaties were rife with problems. Their terms were badly negotiated, and complicated by misunderstandings derived from the wide cultural gulfs that separated the people who negotiated them. Nonetheless these treaties laid the foundation of the political, social, and cultural framework through which Indians and Americans interacted with one another from that point forward. The treaties provoked conflict and violence, this much is true. More importantly, however, these three treaties started Americans, Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Percés, on a path to building a community in which they all held a stake. While disputes over resources, money, and cultural property continually festered, from 1855 on, no one in the Northwest, either Native or American, ever suggested a future where the two disparate civilizations ceased their collaboration. As imperfect as the treaties were, they created a middle ground that endured despite warfare, federal policy, and cultural strife.⁷

⁶ In his monograph concerning the Cheyennes on the central plains, Elliott West set up a model wherein there existed deep psychological differences between Native Peoples and American newcomers. See, Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians: Goldseekers and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998). See also, Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1974).

⁷ See, Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). Also, Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1974).

The Washington Territory and Its Indigenous Peoples

Figure 2, Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle⁸



Prior to his appointment as the Washington territory's first Governor, Isaac Stevens served as the inspector and surveyor of coastal installations in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. This was more than likely an honor-assignment, given in recognition of his already fairly distinguished military career. During the Mexican-American War he served in the Corps of Engineers, seeing action at the Battle of Veracruz. At the siege of

⁸ This map shows the general outlay of the region discussed throughout this study. The red lines show the boundaries drawn that first separated the Idaho Territory from Washington in 1863 and then the Montana Territory from the Idaho Territory in 1864. Salish and Kootenai peoples inhabited the Flathead Valley, which runs from modern Kalispell to Missoula, and the Bitterroot Valley, which extends south of Missoula. Blackfeet lived in the plains east of the mountain front in modern Montana, Nez Perces inhabited the basin area that surrounded modern Lewiston, and extended through Idaho into modern Washington and Oregon. Map made by author, courtesy of ESRI public domain maps and ArcGIS.

Chapultepec he was breveted as a general of his New York volunteer unit, and served in that capacity until he was gravely wounded during the siege of Mexico City. On March 17, 1853, Franklin Pierce appointed General Stevens as Washington's military governor, in part due to his qualifications, also due to Steven's political loyalty from the 1852 presidential campaign. His confirmation slid through congress hastily and without fanfare, being overshadowed by a far more politically venomous battle then already taking shape over the prospect of popular sovereignty. By comparison, any business with Washington, which was far away to the west, and far north of the political fault line at 36-30, was entirely agreeable and benign.⁹

Stevens declared Olympia his territorial capital, and in 1854 convened an elected territorial legislature. He presided over a small settler population of only a few thousand, mostly huddled on the Pacific Coast near the border with Oregon, centered around Olympia. Seattle would not be officially incorporated until 1869, and Spokane not founded until 1871. Perhaps more importantly, being the military governor of Washington made him directly responsible for relations with the Indian peoples that lived within his jurisdiction, which from 1853 to 1859 included everyone living between the mouth of the Columbia and the British possessions and between the Coast and the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains. Thus, whether or not they recognized it, as far as the Office of Indian Affairs was concerned, Stevens first brought the Nez Perce,

⁹ A biography of Stevens was published by a relative of his in 1901. See, Hazard Stevens, *The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens* (New York: Houghton & Mifflin Company, 1901). A scholarly biography of Stevens was published in 1979, See, Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1979).

Flatheads, and Blackfeet - even though the Blackfeet, for the most part, technically lived within the bounds of unorganized territory - under the aegis of American stewardship.¹⁰

For his time, Stevens was a capable and diligent Indian agent thrust into a complex environment. The transfer of the Oregon Country from joint American and British occupation into American hands in 1848 put the region in economic turmoil. Indian peoples living in the Northwest had grown accustomed to a long relationship with factors and traders from the British Empire. Once the United States started to squeeze British traders out of region for the benefit of independently licensed American traders within the territory, the old commercial arrangements fell into chaos. A steady tide of settlers coming over the trails from the plains into Oregon only compounded problems. Though Americans had already been trickling into the region since the 1830s, the conclusion of the Mexican War, and the discovery of gold in California increased the rate of immigration exponentially. Even before Stevens took office, reports filtered east from the Oregon Country frequently describing a specter of unrest and warfare brewing from the coast, throughout the interior plateau and to the front of the mountains.¹¹

It is of little surprise, therefore, that the chief complaint of Steven's first report on the condition of his appointed Indian charges concerned the United States' general lack of knowledge of the human geography, in addition to a general ignorance to the impact of America's imperial wrangling with Britain on regional politics. Over the course of the next two years, through a series of volunteer military expeditions that Stevens personally

¹⁰ See, Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 110-123.

¹¹ While under dual occupation, the Oregon Territory had been a hotbed of competition between American and British trading interests, with the primary beneficiaries being the local indigenous population, which quickly learned to play the competing nations and fur empires off of one another. See, Oscar Osburn Winther, *The Old Oregon Country: A History of Frontier Trade, Transportation and Travel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1969). See Also, Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

lead, he set about improving relations with the Indians of the Northwest. And he made his chief goal an attempt to restrain inter-tribal violence and bring about a general peace in the Northwest.¹²

An examination of Steven's reports from 1853 to 1855 provides a limited but adequate portrait of the conditions on the ground in the years and months leading up to his negotiation of the Walla Walla Treaty of June 9 and 11, 1855, the Hellgate Treaty of July 16, 1855, and Lame Bull Treaty of October 17, 1855. Flatheads, Kootenais, and Blackfeet appear to have been at least somewhat disconnected from the turmoil that was prevalent further to the west. Living far from any center of American power - the closest being Fort Laramie, situated hundreds of miles to the south in the Platte River Valley - the groups' connections to British commerce in Rupert's Land remained secure and mostly unfettered. They also lived far from the main lanes of U.S. civilian immigration, which kept the majority of unwanted intruders out of their territory as well.¹³

At mid-century the diffuse Blackfeet Confederacy still roamed widely in the Northern Plains between the Missouri River to the South and the Saskatchewan River in British Canada. The bands of the Piegans, Siksikas, and Kainais, most commonly associated with the Blackfeet Confederacy, lived in entirely nomadic horse cultures. These bands spread out into hundreds of lodges (family groups) that lived and moved independently of one another. From estimates gathered by Stevens and his subordinates in 1854, The Piegans consisted of about 350 lodges, with about 2,450 individuals, the roughly 250 Siksika lodges held a population of about 1,750 people, and the Kainais were

¹² General Isaac Stevens, "Report for the Washington Territory," *Annual Report to the Secretary of the Interior of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853*, 215.

¹³ Isaac Stevens, "Indians in the Washington Territory, Etc.," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853* (Washington D.C., The Department of the Interior, 1853), 214-223. See also, Robert H. Ruby and John Arthur Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) 57-81, 185-200.

estimated to exist in numbers equal to the Piegans. Altogether, Stevens guessed the Blackfeet Confederacy consisted of 950 family groups, with a population of about 6,650 individuals. For the most part these bands ranged south and north in the spring and summer to hunt bison in Montana and conduct raids south of the Missouri River in lands occupied by Shoshones and Crows, or to raid Cree camps in the north and trade with the British. In the winter, Stevens observed, many gathered in the Marias, Milk, and Judith River drainages, though some remained in Canada and made their camps in close proximity to the British trading outposts situated along the Qu'Appelle and Red Deer Rivers. Another band, the Gros Ventres, alternatively associated with the Blackfeet and their relatives the Assiniboines, had by the middle of the nineteenth century developed a relatively sedentary existence, dwelling in permanent lodges situated along the Milk River in northern Montana. The Milk River was a relatively secure and bustling trade lane, frequented by Americans, Canadians, and - after the destruction of the Mandans and Hidatsas by disease in the late 1830s - Indians from the plains. Stevens estimated that over 2,500 individuals lived in the Gros Ventres' villages.¹⁴

Where the Blackfeet domain bordered the lands of the Cree and Sioux on the east is unclear, but the nominal boundary between Blackfoot Country and territory of the Flatheads was situated at the Hellgate Valley, a gap between the Swan Mountains to the north and the Garnet and Sapphire ranges to the south where the Clark's Fork River meets the Blackfoot River, before both push through the mountains to the Columbia Plateau. The Flatheads lived spread out in semi-sedentary villages that dotted the mountain valleys of what is now Western Montana. Their major domains included the

¹⁴ Isaac Stevens, "The Blackfeet Nation," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 194.

Big Hole Valley, between the Anaconda and Beaverhead Mountains to the West and the Pioneer Mountains to the east, the massive St. Mary's or Flathead Valley between the Cabinet and Mission Mountains, and the long Bitterroot Valley in the Sapphire Mountains. Flatheads lived in close proximity to several related peoples who at varying times closely associated with them. The Kootenais and Kalispels - sometimes alternatively referred to as the Pend d'Oreilles - were closely aligned with the Flatheads, and ultimately included under the same treaty. Other associated peoples who at times dwelt with the Flatheads included the Bitterroot Salish, Spokanes, and Coeur d'Alenes. Some Flathead villages seasonally left the refuge of the mountains to hunt and trade with Shoshones in the drainages of the Three Forks of the Missouri River. They occasionally clashed with the Blackfeet in the Deerlodge Basin, an ambiguous "grey zone" between the respective groups' firmly held territories.¹⁵

The Flatheads already peacefully resided with a great number of alien peoples whom they had absorbed or accepted as part of the normal daily lives. Jesuit missionary and pioneer Pierre-Jean De Smet established a mission in the Bitterroot Valley in 1841. Flathead camps frequently visited the mission, and some Flatheads and Kalispels even established relatively permanent abodes near the mission. In addition to Catholic priests, hundreds of Mohawk Indians, who had migrated west from the violence and pressures of the Indian frontier in the east, settled amongst the Flatheads, they were quickly assimilated into daily life. Some Mohawks, who were already Catholic, lived near the Jesuit mission in the Bitterroot Valley, and others simply dispersed among various Flathead family groups through marriage and adoption. Finally, owing to the legacy of

¹⁵ Isaac I. Stevens, "The Indians of the Washington Territory," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853*. Also see,

the fur trade, the Flatheads absorbed hundreds more Métis, Cree, and Ojibwe migrants into their ranks, giving them a remarkable level of cultural, linguistic, and social diversity, and adding to their historic reputation - going back at least as far as the Corps of Discovery - as masters of trade and diplomacy. Associations among the Flatheads and their allies even drew comparisons from Americans to the “Five Civilized Tribes” of the Indian Territory.¹⁶

Though Flatheads and Blackfeet mostly escaped the economic turmoil felt by Natives throughout the rest of the Northwest after the annexation of the Oregon Territory, by the 1850s they were undoubtedly feeling pressures coming from the south and east. The destruction of the Mandans and Hidatsas left a power vacuum on the plains of the Dakotas soon filled by the Lakota, who pushed themselves out onto the country between the Platte and Yellowstone Rivers, applying pressure to the Crows who were forced north and into greater conflict with the Blackfeet. Immediately to the south a jostling for power and unrest emerged amongst Cheyennes, Bannocks, Shoshones, and other peoples situated along the path of the Oregon Trail, which followed the North Fork of the Platte River from Nebraska into central Wyoming, and then crossed the mountains into the Snake River Valley in Southern Idaho on its way to the Willamette Valley of Oregon, undoubtedly caused by the encroachments of settlers moving along it. Thus, as the Washington Territory came into existence, the Flatheads and Blackfeet, living to the

¹⁶ See, Isaac Stevens, “The Flatheads,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 207-210. Also, Isaac Stevens, “The Pend d’Oreilles,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 210-216. Also, Isaac Stevens, “The Coeur D’Alenes,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington: D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 216-217. See Also, Rev. J. Rothensteiner, “The Flat-Head and Nez Perce Delegation to St. Louis, 1831-1839,” *Saint Louis Catholic Historical Review*, Vols. 2 & 3 (St. Louis, MO: Catholic Historical Society of St. Louis, 1920), 183-197. Also, Robert Bigart, ed., *Letters from the Rocky Mountain Indian Missions* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), xvii-xliii.

north and east of the primary epicenters of conflict, felt most in need of friends and allies to help assure the security of their boundaries.¹⁷

The Nez Perces on the other hand, were engaged in intermittent conflict with settlers arriving in the Palouse Country, the arid plateau between the back ranges of the Rockies and the Cascade Mountains. The Nez Perce dwelt directly southwest from the Flatheads of St. Mary's Valley, along the upper reaches of the Snake River. They frequently camped and found refuge among the Salish living in the Bitterroot Valley, and generally enjoyed peaceful relations with the Flatheads, being able to freely move among them, as evidenced by a Flathead and Nez Perce delegation that convened with a U.S. Army expedition from Fort Laramie along the Yellowstone River in 1851. The Nez Perce mixed semi-sedentary life with that of a nomadic horse culture, as they frequently departed their home territory to move out onto the Palouse with closely associated peoples like Cayuses and Walla Walla, or to hunt bison with the Flatheads in the plains east of the mountains. In the winters they sustained themselves through fishing and horticulture, though they also hunted deer and elk, and held great renown amongst neighboring Indians and whites alike for their skills with animal husbandry, and specifically horse-breeding.¹⁸

The turmoil they found themselves in stemmed from the intrusions of whites moving along the Oregon Trail. In 1847, Nez Perces helped the Cayuses and Walla Walla destroy the Whitman Mission on Mill Creek, near present-day Walla Walla,

¹⁷ See Henry Edwin Stamm, *People of the Wind River: The Eastern Shoshones, 1825-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999). See also, John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). For an overview on the Mandans, see, Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014).

¹⁸ Isaac Stevens, "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 216-220. Isaac Stevens, "The Walla-Walla Nation," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 223-236.

Washington, killing Marcus Whitman and his entire family. A cholera epidemic amongst the Indians of the plateau, which the Cayuses blamed on the mission and other whites, prompted the attack. The Whitman Massacre produced a nationwide scandal, even provoking wild and unsubstantiated accusations among anti-Catholics that the Indians had been incited to violence by Jesuit missionaries in the region, such as Fathers Pierre-Jean De Smet, Anthony Ravalli, and Joseph Cataldo. Settlers in the Oregon Country quickly organized an armed response, aided by the United States Military. Henry A.G. Lee, a settler from Virginia, relative of Robert Lee, and member of Oregon's provisional government commanded American regular troops. Cornelius Gilliam, a North Carolinian and veteran of Black Hawk's War and militia skirmishes with Mormons in Missouri, organized the volunteer militia to combat "renegade" Indians.¹⁹

Violence spread throughout the Northwest with frequent conflicts between Americans and Cayuses, Walla Wallas, Nez Perces, and eventually even Umatillas and Yakimas, with outrages committed by both sides. The Indigenous belligerents did not see themselves as being at war with the United States. Instead, they restricted their violence to individual settlers they considered as unwelcome intruders in their lands. Cayuses, Walla Wallas, and Nez Perces raided individual ranches and settlements, attacking white settlers, taking captives, and stealing livestock. The military and militia strategy to combat this was haphazard at best, viewing every Indian camp in the region as a potential belligerent. While army regulars tried to limit their operations to target only those Native Peoples known to be raiding white settlements, the militia often indiscriminately attacked

¹⁹ Isaac Stevens, "Indians of the Washington Territory, Etc.," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1853), 213-224. Continuing Violence, see: Joseph Palmer, "Indians of the Washington and Oregon Territories," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1855* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1855), 192-195. On the Whitman Massacre, Also see, Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 83-90.

Indian camps, perpetuating a cycle of violence which lasted through the 1850s. Stevens made it his immediate goal to broker a peace, by securing lands and rights of way for settlers in exchange for a healthy bounty of gifts and promises given to the region's Natives. He made achieving peace with those groups not currently engaged in the fighting, nor committed to continuing it, his top priority, hoping to get them out of the conflict so that a concerted effort could be made to pacify the remaining belligerents.²⁰

Stevens Courts the Chiefs

The Flatheads, and their Kootenai and Kalispel allies, and the Blackfeet and Gros Ventres fell under the category of groups inclined toward peace. In his earliest expeditions Stevens started the process of wooing them into accepting truces and exchanging portions of their lands. Though the Blackfeet technically lived outside his jurisdiction, and in unorganized territory, Stevens pursued a peace with them. He hoped to restrict their activities to an area north of the Missouri River and east of the mouth of Blackfoot River, first laid out by the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty Council. In the summer of 1853, he had sent a representative amongst the Piegans, who welcomed the scout into the camp of Little Dog, near the Cypress Hills in modern Alberta. Gifts were distributed, and Little Dog was persuaded to bring a delegation of all of the Blackfeet over whom he had influence south to Fort Benton – a brand new outpost on the Missouri River - for a meeting with Stevens and representatives of the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines.²¹

²⁰ Isaac Stevens, "Statement on Indian Affairs in the Territory of Washington," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1856* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1956), 184-191. Also, a published journal, of a firsthand account recorded by Lieutenant Lawrence Kip, who fought in the Northwest Wars of the 1850s, provides us a window onto the nature of the violence and fighting. See, Lawrence Kip and Clifford E. Trafzer, ed., *Indian War in the Pacific Northwest: The Journal of Lieutenant Lawrence Kip* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

²¹ Isaac Stevens, "The Piegans," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 200.

Roughly 30 warriors, chiefs, and their families from the Piegans, Siksikas, Kainais, Gros Ventres, and Assiniboinés attended the Council, convened September 21, 1853. Using Little Dog's influence as his claim to legitimacy, Isaac Stevens opened the council by addressing the Piegan Chief directly:

You have shown your goodwill to us by going through difficult passes and over bad roads. You have promised to go with us farther if we desire it. This shows your good faith and I sincerely thank you for it. I, myself, have come a great distance, and have passed many tribes on my way to the great ocean of the West. I shall pass through many tribes more with whom you have waged war for many years. I wish to carry a message of peace from you to them. Your Great Father has sent me to bear a message to you and all his other children. It is, that he wishes you to live at peace with each other and the whites. He desires that you should be under his protection, and partake equally with the Crows and Assiniboinés of his bounty. Live in peace with all the neighboring Indians, protect all the whites passing through your country, and the Great Father will be your fast friend.²²

Another Piegan headman, Low Horn, then relayed to Stevens, through an interpreter, that long before, the Blackfeet had enjoyed a general peace with the Flatheads, Kootenais, Kalispels, and even Nez Perce, allowing them to hunt bison on the Missouri River. In recent times, however, such arrangements had become more uncertain. Now that the Flatheads and Blackfeet sent war parties in one another's directions he had concerns. Low Horn further informed Stevens, that a general peace among the Blackfeet and Gros Ventres was already in place, but they were at war with the Crows and fighting with the Assiniboinés.²³

Stevens greased the wheels of diplomacy with the promise of more gifts for the delegation. He then secured promises from all of the headmen present that they would

²² Isaac Stevens, "Blackfeet Council," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 201-202.

²³ Isaac Stevens, "Blackfeet Council," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 201-202.

cease attacking Crows south of the Missouri River, and that the Blackfeet and Assiniboines would come to terms of friendship. Informing the delegation that he was about to head West for councils with the Flatheads and Nez Perce, the Blackfeet granted him permission to carry a message that the Blackfeet “desired to live on terms of peace with them,” and that “they would meet them in council” to arrange such a deal.²⁴ Stevens also asked for an agreement from the present headmen to stop raiding the Flatheads, which the delegation agreed to, with the caveat that they could not promise similar restraint from the lodges of the chiefs who had either refused to attend or were not aware of the meeting - which in all likelihood was a vast majority of the entire confederacy. Stevens then distributed more gifts among the delegation before he departed Fort Benton. He promised that he would return to them with word of his negotiations conducted west of the Mountains as they were completed. Supposedly Low Horn and Little Dog left Fort Benton so committed to carrying out the terms of the agreement that they returned to the rest of the Piegans demanding restraint from all the young men attacking the Flatheads. Furthermore, when Assiniboines attacked Little Dog’s camp near the Missouri River the following year, severely wounding Little Dog, himself, he refused retaliation because of the “promises” he had made to General Stevens.²⁵

The Governor received a warm welcome from the Flatheads, when he arrived December 3, 1853 with news of a possible renewed peace between the Salish and the Blackfeet. A portion of Steven’s entourage, led by Lieutenant John Mullan, had already spent the fall traversing Flathead country, and estimated that the whole of the nation was

²⁴ Isaac Stevens, “Blackfeet Council,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 202.

²⁵ Isaac Stevens, “Blackfeet Council,” *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 203.

eager for an arrangement of formal peace and friendship. According to Stevens, both the camps of the Flatheads and Bitterroot Salish, which he estimated to number 410 lodges, recognized a Salish headman by the name of Many Horses, known to Americans as Victor, as their principal chief. Victor was the son of a late Flathead chief, well-loved among the Jesuits operating in the Bitterroot and St. Mary's Valleys. He converted to Catholicism and took the baptismal name of Loyola. Other significant headman in the region included Ambrose, another Catholic convert, who was nominally the chief of the Upper Pend d'Oreilles - an offshoot of the Kalispels, but recognized as the chief of the Coeur d'Alenes and Spokanes living in the St. Mary's Valley as well - Chiefs Michel and Batiste of the Kootenais, and Alexander, chief of the Kalispels.²⁶

During negotiations, Stevens offered to build a fort in the Hellgate Valley in order to enforce a peace with the Blackfeet, and to establish an agency there. He also offered to help broker the terms of a renewed peace with the Blackfoot Confederacy. Both of these proposals were accepted amicably by the Salish and Kalispel headmen, though the Kootenais and Bonner's Ferry Band regarded the terms with skepticism. Nonetheless, he secured promises from all involved that they would meet for a treaty council. Now possessing two cornerstones of the general peace that he desired, Stevens headed further West, out onto the troubled Columbia Plateau to gauge the mood of the Nez Perces and their allies.

By 1854, the Nez Perces, Walla Wallas, and Cayuses were tired of the violence sparked by the sacking of Whitman's Mission in 1847. The Nez Perces, who dwelt on the furthest eastern fringe of the of the war zone, had only half-heartedly supported a

²⁶ Isaac Stevens, "The Flatheads," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 207-210. And, Isaac Stevens, "The Pend d'Oreilles," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 210-212.

continued war effort with Americans in the region. Pressures put on the Cayuses and Walla Walla by seven years of military and militia operations targeted against them greatly diminished their strength and their will to continue fighting. Though already closely aligned, the stresses of fighting and casualties prompted the three groups to become even more tightly aligned and integrated. An Indian census taken in 1851 estimated the Nez Perce strength at 1,880 souls, by late 1853, and early 1854, Stevens' expeditions guessed that their overall population had probably increased, due to the absorption of a great number of outsiders, though just how many Cayuse and Walla Walla camps had ever existed before the commencement of hostilities was unknown.²⁷

A power vacuum left by the recent death of an influential Nez Perce headman, Tow-wattie-or, or Young Chief, made the situation more complex. Tow-wattie-or possessed the respect of warriors from all three bands, the loss of his voice cast the Natives' foreign policy into a state of disarray. Lieutenants Mullan and Donaldson had first come into contact with the Nez Perce while Stevens was still meeting with the Flatheads. They reported that at the time the Nez Perce possessed no chief of note to negotiate with, as none had the influence to speak for the whole of the tribe. Many of the Cayuse warriors operated under the influence of a War Chief named Painted Shirt, who had helped lead the attack on Whitman's Mission, but who, by 1853, seemed inclined toward negotiation. Reports sent to Stevens by Mullan and Donaldson, characterize him as follows:

After the [Whitman] massacre [Painted Shirt] was the one who took a wife from the captive females - a young and beautiful girl of fourteen. In order to gain her quiet submission to his wishes, he threatened to take the life of her mother and younger sisters. Thus in the power of savages, in a new

²⁷ Isaac Stevens, "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 218.

and wild country remote from civilization and all hope of restoration, she yielded herself to one whose hands were yet red with the blood of an elder brother... During the negotiations for these captives and subsequent to their delivery [at Fort Ogden], [Painted Shirt] spoke with much feeling of his attachment to his white wife, and urged that she should still live with him. He said he was a great warrior, possessed many horses and cattle, and would give them all to her; or if she did not like to reside with his people, he would forsake his people and make the country of her friends, the pale-faces, his home.²⁸

Apart from providing a window into the complexities and horror of warfare in the Washington Territory, Painted Shirt's story also reveals clues of an increasing sense of inter-civilizational accommodation developing on the Columbia Plateau, or at least a sense among the plateau Native Peoples that Americans were now a permanent fixture of their lives. All indications are that Painted Shirt chose to remain with his wife after the Walla Walla Council.²⁹

A further sign of peace arose in July, 1854, when an expedition from Fort Owen, an American Fur Company post built in 1850 on the site of the old Jesuit mission in the Bitterroot Valley, encountered a delegation of Nez Perces and Cayuses on July 25th. The delegates informed the American expedition that they had heard that the Americans wanted "to make war upon them, and take away their horses."³⁰ The traders from the fort assured the Indians that their intentions were peaceful and camped with the Natives. The expedition then met with six medicine men from the Nez Perces and Cayuses who invited

²⁸ Isaac Stevens, "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 218.

²⁹ Isaac Stevens, "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 216-220.

³⁰ Isaac Stevens, "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 218.

the Americans to join them in a tobacco ceremony. They then asked them to carry word to the “Great Father” that they desired friendship and peace.³¹

The groundwork was all laid. By 1855, it appeared, that the Umatillas, who had joined in the raiding against Americans, wanted peace as well. By June, 1855, Stevens had a treaty with the Nez Perces, by July, he had one with the Flatheads, Kootenais, and Kalispels as well. And by October of 1855, he would even come to terms with the vast Blackfeet Confederacy. Some problems still persisted. While in negotiations with the Blackfeet, in September 1855, a Yakima war party descended upon and killed eight Americans in eastern Washington, declaring their intentions for a general war against whites. One of Stevens’ sub-agents, Andrew Bolon, who was already camped with the Spokanes and Coeur d’Alenes, quickly departed toward the Yakimas to restore peace, but instead of receiving him the Yakimas killed Bolon and his entourage on September 20, 1855. To make matters worse, the Yakimas claimed they had killed General Stevens, which threatened the framework of the entire peace he and his agents had just negotiated. Returning from Fort Benton in October 1855, however, Stevens was able to prove he still yet lived, calming unrest among the Nez Perces and their allies, and even securing pledges of their aid in subduing the Yakimas. Though fighting with Yakimas would persist until Stevens left office as Washington’s Governor in 1857, he had established the terms of coexistence between Native Peoples and Americans in the Northwest.³²

The Treaties of 1855

³¹ Isaac Stevens, “The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Pelouse,” *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 218-219.

³² J. Cain, “The Oregon and Washington Territories,” *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1855*, 192-195. A brief history of Agent Andrew Bolon’s death exists in the following account. See, Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, *Tragedy of the Wahn-Shum: The Death of Andrew Bolon, Indian Agent to the Yakima Nation, In Mid-September, 1855* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1968).

The treaty councils themselves, conducted from the summer through the fall of 1855, deserve attention, though aspects of them have been covered in other sources. The Walla Walla Council has been looked at extensively by Merrill Beal, Alvin Josephy, and Elliott West, though it has largely been analyzed for its role in planting the seeds of conflict that sprouted with the Nez Perce War. Robert Bigart remains the foremost authority on the Hellgate Treaty, and his account of it is sound. As for the Lamie Bull Council, it received considerable attention from John Ewers' comprehensive history of the Blackfeet, but was viewed by him as a close to Blackfeet independence. I intend to view these treaties not so much for the chapters of history they closed, but for what they started. They laid the foundations for a new a status quo in the Northwest that, I argue, persists in large measure to this day.³³

Again, the treaties were far from perfectly negotiated. Their complex terms could quickly be misinterpreted within the context of the wide cultural gulfs that separated Americans and the Native Peoples who negotiated them. Land cessions still stood at their basis, and within that stood the potential for conflict, and even warfare. These problems, however, could not and should not overshadow the spirit of compromise that existed within the councils as well. For as much as the councils concerned the settlement of borders and property, they were equally a stage upon which American and native agents in the region were familiarizing themselves with one another, and with the concept of coexistence. At their most basic level, the treaty councils concerned the establishment of

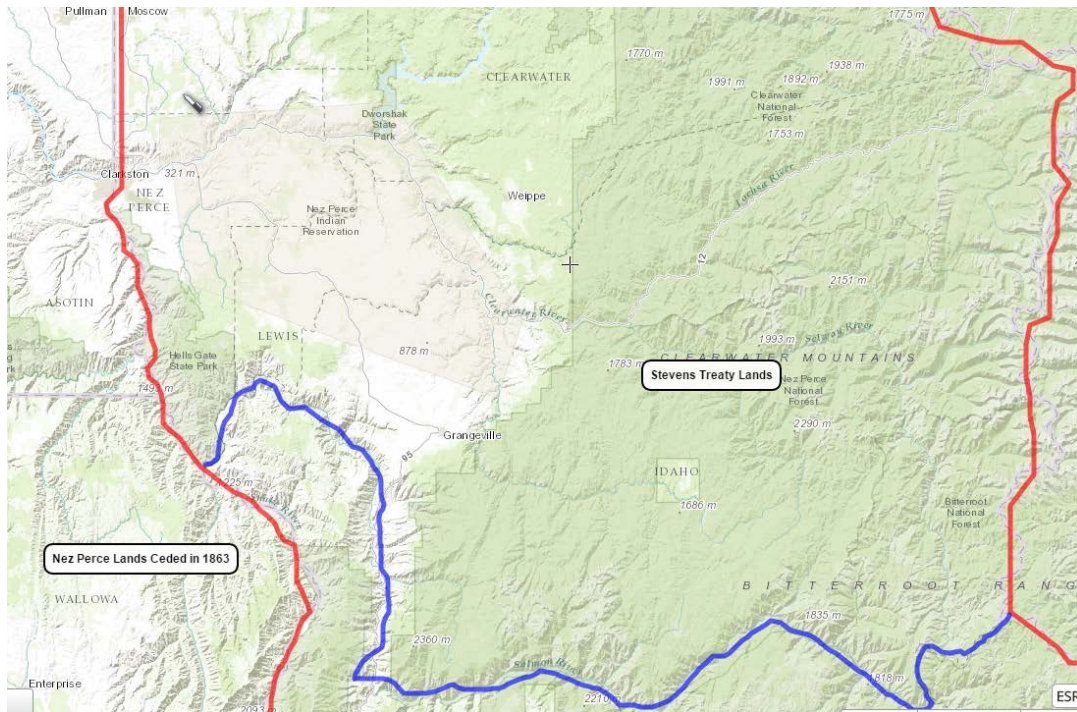
³³ See, Robert J. Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, *In the Name of the Salish & Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Nation* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 1996). Also, John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957). See also, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997), 285-332.

a precedent for how Indians and non-Indians were to exist in shared space. So while disputes over removal and property, and problems caused by miscommunication, would continue to fester on into the latter stages of the nineteenth century, from 1855 forward few people, either American or Native, suggested a complete break in the middle ground that they found themselves stepping out onto in 1855.

Over time the middle ground between Native and American worlds rested on far stronger bonds than just the terms of the treaties. After 1855, the worlds of Americans, Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces, melded together physically, culturally, socially, and spiritually, past a point where they could ever again be disentangled. Though this process was already well underway before Stevens' councils were held, the establishment of the treaty system in the Northwest only accelerated this process. Whether the societal evolution commenced by the treaty negotiations unleashed a complex set of both positive and negative consequences that will be analyzed later in this work. For my purposes here, I only wish to point out that the creation of the reserves constituted less of a "denouement" to a Native history that then descends into domination and persecution, than it amounted to an opening of a new chapter of Indian experiences, with its own trials and triumphs that are equally worthy of consideration. At their cores, the agencies erected by the treaties revolutionized how Americans thought about "Indianness," which up to the Civil War was largely applied to people who lived outside the normal scope and bounds of what Americans regarded as their civilization, but over the course of the next century became far more difficult to define.³⁴

³⁴ "Middle Ground" is a term most commonly applied to the study of colonial Indian relations. It is, however, a primary contention of this project that the same or similar approach can be applied to history of many of the West's Indian reservations. Critics of "Middle Ground" approaches have often been quick to argue that they downplay the prevalence of conflict. This criticism, however, largely misses the great

Figure 3, Nez Perce Country³⁵



With attitudes on the Palouse moving toward peace at the end 1854, Isaac Stevens convened a council with the Cayuses, Walla Wallas, Umatillas, and Nez Percés in May 1855 at Waiilatpu - the Place of the Rye Grass – close to where Whitman’s Mission had stood in 1847. Aiding Stevens in the negotiations was Oregon’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Joseph Palmer, and their main agenda entailed securing an agreement that would move the Indians away from white settlers, and guarantee lands where Americans would

degree to which proponents of the “middle ground” have stressed that their arguments are often if not always coached in the ever-present threat of conflict and the tenuous nature of a middle ground. Accommodation and coexistence are rarely if ever perfectly peaceful processes, and are often interrupted by disagreements, quarrels, and even violence. See, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For the major counter argument, see, Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2007).

³⁵ This map shows the Nez Perce domain in Idaho. The shaded area shows the ultimate boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation settled in 1863. The red lines show the boundaries of Idaho and Montana settled in 1863, and 1864. The Blue line follows the course of the Salmon River, north of which the Nez Percés retained treaty-protected hunting rights. Southwest of the Lapwai Reserve is the Wallowa Valley region, territory included in the 1855 treaty, but ceded by the 1863 treaty. Map made by author, courtesy of ESRI public domain maps and ArcGIS.

be safe by creating reserves that would ideally be inviolable by unwelcome whites.

Misunderstandings arose over the ceding of lands, particular between Stevens and the nominal leaders of the Cayuse delegation, chiefs Five Crows and Stikus. Enraged by what they were hearing, the Cayuses and Umatillas even stormed out of the council, but returned in June. While Stevens and Palmer certainly wanted land concessions from the Indians they had other interests and concerns they needed to balance as well. They feared that if Natives continued to graze their livestock outside the bounds of a reserve that theft by Americans would produce an excuse for violence. Furthermore, they feared that if the Natives failed to recognize grazing and settling rights for whites they would resume their raiding.³⁶

The spirit of the agreement ultimately reached was that the Native Peoples would retain their hunting and fishing rights in the land they were ceding, while also recognizing the rights of Americans to settle lands outside their reserves. The agreement recognized the protection of property for both Indians and Americans with the intent that the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) would investigate and prosecute any abuses from either side. On June 9, 1855, Cayuses, Walla Wallas, and Umatillas agreed to be confederated on a 245,000 acre reserve located in Northern Oregon. On June 11th, the peoples who fell under the influence of the Nez Perce delegation came to similar terms with a treaty that created a reserve of similar size that straddled northern Oregon,

³⁶ Document: "Nez Perce Treaty, 1855," Center for Columbia River History, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/nezperce.htm>. Also, the proceedings of the Walla Walla Council were recorded by Lieutenant Lawrence Kip. See, Lawrence Kip, *The Walla Walla Treaty Council of 1855: The Official Proceedings of the Council in Walla Walla Valley of 1855* (Peoria, IL: Cosmoline Press, 2014). Also, an account of the Walla Walla proceedings is provided by Isaac Stevens in the report he filed with the Department of the Interior in 1856, Isaac Stevens, "Indian Affairs in the Territory of Washington," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1856* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1856), 184-190.

southwest Washington, and the panhandle of Idaho. The treaty described its metes and bounds as follows:

Commencing where the Moh ha-na-she or southern tributary of the Palouse River flows from the spurs of the Bitter Root Mountains; thence down said tributary to the mouth of the Ti-nat-pan-up Creek; thence southerly to the crossing of the Snake River ten miles below the mouth of the Al-po-wa-wi River; thence to the source of the Al-po-wa-wi River in the Blue Mountains; thence along the crest of the Blue Mountains; thence to the crossing of the Grand Ronde River, midway between the Grand Ronde and the mouth of the Woll-low-how River; thence along the divide between the waters of the Woll-low-how and Powder Rivers; thence to the crossing of the Snake River fifteen miles below the mouth of the Powder River; thence to the Salmon River above the crossing; thence by the spurs; of the Bitter Root Mountains to the place of beginning.³⁷

Also included in the agreement, under the terms of Article 5, was the promise to build two schools, a hospital, and supply physicians, a carpenter, blacksmith, gunsmith, and other skilled workers. It also created a salaried position for a Nez Perce chief selected as the tribes' representative. Finally under Article 10, the Nez Perces recognized the rights of a white man, William Craig, who had already settled inside of the reserve laid out by the treaty, but who was already considered, by many of the 48 Nez Perce delegates that signed the treaty to be a friend and welcome member of their lives.³⁸

Among the prominent headmen who signed the treaty was Lawyer, who emerged from the Walla Walla Council as the Nez Perce's nominal head chief. Toohoolhoolzote and Looking Glass, two headmen who twenty-two years later would follow the younger Joseph into rebellion also signed the treaty, and at the time were relatively satisfied by the agreement. The elder Joseph of the Wallowa Valley Nez Perces also signed the

³⁷ Document: "Nez Perce Treaty, 1855," Center for Columbia River History, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/nezperce.htm>.

³⁸ Document: "Nez Perce Treaty, 1855," Center for Columbia River History, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/nezperce.htm>. Also, Lawrence Kip, *The Walla Walla Treaty Council of 1855: The Official Proceedings of the Council in Walla Walla Valley of 1855* (Peoria, IL: Cosmoline Press, 2014).

agreement, which had largely protected his home territory from white incursion, for the time being.³⁹

Figure 4, Flathead Country⁴⁰



A month later, at a council convened in the Hellgate Valley, representatives of the Flatheads, Kalispels, Kootenais, and Upper Pend d'Oreilles signed their treaty with Stevens. A group of roughly 1,200 Salish peoples, and their headman met Stevens on July 9, about 6 miles west of the present-day location of downtown Missoula, Montana. Negotiations took a shape similar to those conducted at Walla Walla. Stevens distributed an ample amount of gifts, and attempted to receive land cessions, chiefly out of the Big

³⁹ Document: "Nez Perce Treaty, 1855," Center for Columbia River History, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/nezperce.htm>.

⁴⁰ The dotted red line indicates treaty boundaries established between Blackfeet and Salish and Kootenai hunting grounds, established in the 1855 treaties. The dotted yellow line indicates the area surveyed for the Jocko Reserve established in 1855, which became the full extent of the reservation following the removal of the Bitterroot Salish from the Bitterroot Valley. While the Hellgate Council established a secondary reserve in the Bitterroot Valley, this secondary territory was never surveyed, and boundaries never proposed or indicated. Map made by author, courtesy of ESRI public domain maps and ArcGIS.

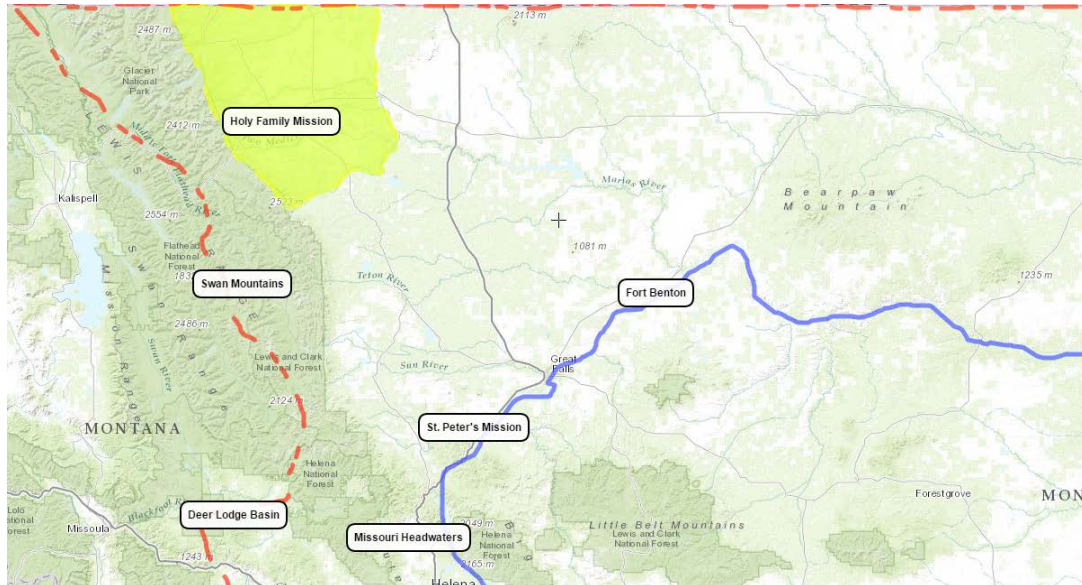
Hole and Bitterroot Valleys, but assured the delegates that they would be able to retain their rights to hunt and fish in all of the lands they had used by custom. A reserve was negotiated to encompass the Saint Mary's and Jocko valleys and their surrounds in the mountains and in the Clark's Fork Valley. Stevens agreed to pay the sum of \$120,000 in annuity for ceded lands, and to provide schools and skilled workers for the Indians benefit. Similar to the Nez Perce, the treaty created a \$500 annual salary for the position of head chief of the confederated Flatheads, a position which fell to Victor. Finally, the Flatheads also recognized a declaration of cessation to all of the Hudson's Bay Company's trade claims in the Flathead Valley, and recognized the rights of the Jesuits at St. Ignatius to remain among them. Victor, Ambrose, Michel (the recognized chief of the Kootenais), and Alexander, along with a handful of other headmen and warriors signed the treaty. The Bonner's Ferry Band of Kootenais, who lived in the Clark Fork Valley refused the treaty and departed the council.⁴¹

The major sticking point to the negotiation, from Stevens' perspective, was with the Bitterroot Salish and Flatheads; Victor, their recognized chief, forcefully told Stevens that he and his band refused to vacate the Bitterroot Valley. Stevens was anxious to see the treaty ratified and to formalize the delicate peace he had won. So Stevens accommodated Victor for the sake of larger goals. Like all of the other Flathead, Kalispel, and Kootenai headman, Victor was a vocal and influential proponent of maintaining peace with white settlers, and the Bitterroot Salish's reputation for peaceful conduct with whites well established. Thus, knowing full well that an attempt to coerce

⁴¹ Document: "Treaty of Hellgate," The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, <http://www.cskt.org/documents/gov/helgatetreaty.pdf>.

the Flatheads would only cause problems, and perhaps even send a peaceful band into rebellion, Stevens quickly negotiated a secondary reserve in the Bitterroot Valley.⁴²

Figure 5, Blackfoot Country⁴³



Finally in September, Stevens returned to the Blackfoot with news that the Flatheads and Nez Perce had formally accepted peace and reserves. Stevens and the Blackfoot debated terms until they reached an agreement on October 17, 1855, signing the Lane Bull Treaty. Under Article 1, the Blackfoot formally accepted a general peace with the Confederated Flathead Nation and the Nez Perce Nation. Under articles two and three, the Piegans, Siksikas, Kainais, and Gros Ventres agreed to be confederated onto a reserve with bounds laid out by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, which ran north of the

⁴² Document: "Treaty of Hellgate," The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, <http://www.cskt.org/documents/gov/helgatetreaty.pdf>. Also, Robert J. Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, *In the Name of the Salish & Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Nation* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 1996).

⁴³ The dotted red line indicates the treaty boundary between the Blackfoot and the Salish and Kootenais (as well as with Canada). The solid blue line traces the course of the Missouri River. Between the river and the treaty line stood the Blackfoot treaty lands agreed upon by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, and reaffirmed by the Lane Bull Treaty. The yellow shaded area indicates the ultimate boundaries of the Blackfoot Reservation, settled in 1896. Map made by author, courtesy of ESRI public domain maps and ArcGIS.

Missouri River, from the Hellgate Canyon and the Swan Mountains in the west, east to the Mouth of the Yellowstone River. Article 3 further granted the Indians hunting rights on a trail leading south along the Muscle Shell River, with the river itself being denoted as the boundary between Crow and Blackfoot Territory. Otherwise, the treaty followed patterns of the other two, granting rights of settlers in ceded lands, and rights of certain white settlers to live among the Indians, with their consent. Promises were made for skilled laborers, schools, and annuities as well.⁴⁴

The delegates then recognized a Piegan headman by the name of Lame Bull as their principal chief, though both Low Horn and Little Dog also signed as headman of the Piegans. Signing on behalf of the Kainais were their headmen Onis-tay-say-nah-que-im, The Father of All Children, The Bull's Back Fat, Heavy Shield, Nah-tose-onistah, and Calf Shirt. Siksika Chiefs Three Bulls and Old Kootomais, friends and allies of Low Horn and Little Dog, also signed, as did Bear's Shirt, Little Soldier, and Star Robe from the Gros Ventres.⁴⁵

In total, the three confederated Indian nations ceded over 90 million acres of land, which constituted the majority of modern Idaho and Montana, along with large swathes of Oregon and Washington. The nominal land losses were staggering, but in the following decades, members of all three nations largely retained the ability to use the lands that they had always used. As with any treaty process there was much that came out of the Councils of 1855 that is easy criticize. Isaac Stevens, like any other Indian Agent of his era was working primarily as a vanguard of white settlement, and his chief

⁴⁴ Document: "Treaty with the Blackfeet, 1855," The Oklahoma State University Digital Library, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/bla0736.htm>.

⁴⁵ Document: "Treaty with the Blackfeet, 1855," The Oklahoma State University Digital Library, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/bla0736.htm>.

motivations and goals revolved around clearing a peaceful path for other Americans to exploit ceded lands through mining, logging, and homesteading.⁴⁶

Another side to this narrative often goes unrecognized. Evaluated by the standards of his time, Stevens deserved some praise. Compared to other agents who conducted countless negotiations elsewhere, Stevens was remarkably flexible, and inclined to take a path of compromise over coercion. As evidenced by his negotiations with Victor over the Bitterroot, Stevens often showed a willingness to grant concessions so long as they did not compromise the most critical priority, which was to prevent a rejoining of the general state of warfare in the Washington Territory he inherited in 1853. Here too, the headmen who negotiated with Stevens deserved a large measure of credit as well. Though it would be impossible to say that any of the many chiefs who signed the Walla Walla, Hellgate, and Lame Bull Treaties were entirely enthusiastic with the deals they brokered, almost none of them were disgruntled either. As a general universality the chiefs realized the worlds that they were living in were rapidly changing. Almost all of them adjusted to the reality that Americans were now a permanent feature of their lives, and almost all of them were determined to peacefully coexist with the newcomers, within reason. Much of the festering - and justified - unhappiness that had characterized the treaty councils held on the plains with Sioux and other Indian groups further east was largely absent, only a handful of dissenters existed, and from among them, no one was inclined toward war in

⁴⁶ Though the scope of available literature is somewhat limited, Stevens remains, nonetheless, somewhat a polarizing figure. His biographer, Kent Richards is largely defensive of him, meanwhile Lang Willi's history of the Washington Territory paints him in a considerably more negative light, primarily as a creature of insurmountable ambition. See, Lang Willi, *Confederacy of Ambition: William Winlock Miller and the Making of the Washington Territory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996).

1855, and the attitudes of the federal agents and Indian delegates alike deserve a great measure of the credit.⁴⁷

The largest conflict that remained in the Northwest in 1855 was a war with the Yakimas, which unfortunately spread to include some of the Umatillas, Cayuses, Walla Wallas, and Nez Perces due to indiscriminate militia violence. Rank and file settlers coming into the Washington Territory still largely viewed all of its Indian inhabitants as being one in the same. By 1858, however, a general peace was largely in place, and it persisted between Americans and the confederated nations of the Nez Perce, Flatheads, and Blackfeet for the next decade, until a new round of treaties and negotiations conducted with the three nations by Stevens' successors rankled the peace that he had won. Ultimately the Flatheads and Blackfeet avoided war, if not tragedy. A second treaty signed with some of the Nez Perce in 1863 placed those who refused its terms on a course of war, violence, and sorrow with the United States. It is a speculative point, but conceivable, that had the initial status quo put in place by Stevens persisted entirely unchanged, the Nez Perce War might have been avoided altogether, along with hardships that confinement and removal placed upon the Flatheads. By 1880, regardless, disputes had subsided into an unbroken peace that remained for the rest of the century and into the modern era. A long held point of pride for the Flatheads was that they avoided ever fighting a war with the United States. Despite some violent clashes in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the Blackfeet, too, avoided the disaster of war. As for the Nez Perces, public

⁴⁷ Perhaps the greatest peculiarity of Stevens' negotiating style was his tendency to seek land title and cessions with necessarily wanting to exhaust Indian rights of land use. Thus, all three of these foundational 1855 treaties contained clauses extending Indian's rights for food gathering, hunting, and fishing in ceded territories, clauses which were absent from later negotiations. Document: "Nez Perce Treaty, 1855," Center for Columbia River History, <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/nezperce.htm>. Also, Document: "Treaty of Hellgate," The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, <http://www.cskt.org/documents/gov/helgatetreaty.pdf>. Also, Document: "Treaty with the Blackfeet, 1855," The Oklahoma State University Digital Library, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/blat0736.htm>.

opinion ultimately pinned responsibility for their disagreements with the United States in the late 1870s on the bungling of the military and the OIA. Government mistakes forced those who refused the 1863 treaty into corner, from which they saw no other alternative than war. Even considering these disturbances, compared to the plains, the Northwest from 1855 onward became a much less violent place.

Peace between Americans, Flatheads, Blackfeet, and Nez Perces, however, was not total and absolute. Although the Stevens treaties did indeed break a cycle of pitched warfare between Indians and Americans in Western Montana and on the Palouse from 1855 until 1877, the peace that Steven's brokered was always tenuous at best, particularly with the Blackfeet Confederacy. Though, among other things, the 1855 treaties were supposed to establish a formal and total peace between the Blackfeet and the Nez Perces and Confederated Salish and Kootenais who seasonally used hunting grounds in and on the borders of Blackfeet Country, a perfect truce never fully came into existence. And upon occasion, the Blackfeet chased hunters from the other two nations out of their lands, or even occasionally raided the Confederated Salish and Kootenais in retribution for perceived depredations of their territory. The primary reason for these punctuated breakdowns emanated from Stevens' own shortsighted belief in the expansiveness of the terms he had brokered at the Lame Bull Treaty and the councils previously held at Fort Benton and in Blackfeet Country by himself and by his agents.⁴⁸

Based on the available evidence, it appears that Stevens and the OIA probably over-relied on the power of the Piegons to speak for the entirety of the confederacy.

⁴⁸ R. H. Lansdale, "The Flathead Tribes," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1857* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1857), 377-381. Also, John Owen, "Camp on the Spokane River," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1858* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1858), 269.

Evidence for this comes from a general absence and silence of Kainai and Siksika voices in the peace and council proceedings. Stevens' oversight is further underscored by the over-representation of Piegan signatories to the terms of the Lane Bull Treaty, which becomes curious and questionable when weighed against the fact that, according to Stevens' own estimates of the entire Blackfoot Confederacy's strength, the populations of the Kainais and Siksikas together overwhelming outnumbered the Piegans. In all likelihood, Stevens had asked Piegan headmen like Lane Bull, Low Horn, and Little Dog to speak for people whom they could not. Subtle hints come across from the proceedings that these Piegan headman had even attempted to warn Stevens and his agents that there were vast swathes of the Blackfoot over whom they could not claim influence, and these warnings went all but ignored.⁴⁹

His oversights on this matter, however, become understandable, if still not defensible, in consideration of the territorial and numerical vastness of the Blackfoot compared to the Nez Perces and the Flatheads. Compounding difficulty was the fact that large sections of the Blackfoot Confederacy lived seasonally or permanently in Canada, and not Montana, and therefore lived far outside a scope of influence that Stevens could not have even possessed in his wildest dreams. It comes as little surprise that most of the Washington Indian department's dealings came to be with the Piegans, since - of the three bands - they ranged the furthest south, and most consistently and permanently resided within the territorial bounds of the United States. It is likely that many if not most of the lodges and headman of the Siksika and Kainai bands were not even aware of the

⁴⁹ Isaac Stevens, "Indians in the Washington Territory, Etc.," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853* (Washington D.C., The Department of the Interior, 1853), 214-223. Also, Isaac Stevens, "The Blackfoot Nation," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 194-197. Isaac Stevens, "Blackfoot Council," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1854), 201-202.

negotiations taking place in 1855, and only became aware of them after the fact, which would have made the legitimacy of the Lamie Bull Treaty, in their eyes, quite dubious at best. Still others likely even knew about the negotiations but chose to avoid or ignore them, without the proper impulses necessary to feel they “needed” a treaty to guarantee rights against a tangible threat from settlers, invaders, or enemies.⁵⁰

Based on the evidence, furthermore, it seems likely that the Piegan delegates to the councils and to the Lamie Bull Treaty were not even capable of speaking for the whole of their band, which again - based on population estimates that are gatherable - was, by itself, larger than the whole of the Flathead and Nez Perce nations. The Piegans’ fully committed plains-subsistence way of life, furthermore, likely made their inter-band politics even more diffuse than the collaborative, or confederacy-level politics of the other two Native nations. Simply put, it seems likely that the headman of individual Piegan lodges likely enjoyed a greater degree of independence from the influence of prominent chiefs like Lamie Bull, than did the family and kin-level headman who fell under the leadership of Lawyer and Victor. Considering that occasional violence between Piegans and Nez Perces or Flatheads continued on after the Lamie Bull Council, it seems fair to say that even the Piegan band was not united on the terms of the treaty.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Numerous studies have extrapolated the necessity of diffuse political structures for people who dwelt in the harsh environs of the plains, necessitated by the scarceness of resources and the rapidity of trade and exchange. See, Paul H. Carlson, *The Plains Indians* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998). Also, John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957).

⁵¹ From a report submitted to the OIA in 1858, it seems apparent that there existed Piegan bands that were either opposed to the Lamie Bull Council or had simply ignored it. John Owen, the proprietor of Fort Owen, in the Bitterroot Valley, reported that a number of the Blackfeet still did not trust Flatheads, and were opposed to seeing the Flatheads hunt in their lands. John Owen, “Camp on the Spokane River,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1858* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1858), 269.

The other remaining question was that of Victor's secondary reserve located in the Bitterroot Valley, which was never surveyed, and never officially closed to white settlement. Some, including Robert Bigart, have speculated as to why this was, even suggesting that Stevens' himself never truly took the secondary reserve seriously as a long term solution. Stevens, in this scenario, simply put off a distracting fight for another day, to secure a larger immediate goal: the Hellgate Treaty. A consideration of context and evidence, however, casts this as little more than idle speculation. After achieving peace with the Walla Wallas, Umatillas, Cayuses, Nez Perces, Flatheads, and Blackfeet, Stevens spent most of the remainder of his tenure of office in Washington trying to achieve peace with the Yakimas. He left the territory in 1858 to return to Washington, D.C., and then rejoined the military shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, where he died in Chantilly, Virginia, on September 1, 1862, at the Second Battle of Bull Run. However Stevens might have felt about the secondary reserve, it quickly became an immaterial point. Considering his death came a decade before the secondary reserve was actually revoked, this places little blame for its revocation on him.⁵²

The original intent of the secondary reserve, furthermore, becomes impossible to determine after Stevens' death, and, regardless, the Flathead's loss of the Bitterroot Valley ultimately had far more to do with the OIA and military's newfound commitment to confinement and removal in the Northwest in the 1870s than with any supposed and shadowy plans allegedly concocted in the 1850s. The failure to secure the Bitterroot as a permanent reserve, ultimately, lies with the entirety of the OIA, and with a trail of

⁵² See, Robert Bigart, *In the Name of the Salish and Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Indian Reservation* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 1996). Also, Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1979). Also, Lang Willi, *Confederacy of Ambition: William Winlock Miller and the Making of the Washington Territory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 81-111.

successive Indian Agents in the 1860s who chose not to live up to the terms promised Victor at the council in the Hellgate Valley.

Of interest, however, is still the remarkably peaceful course that disputes over the Bitterroot took, especially in comparison to a host of other infamous removal disputes that quickly became horrendously and shamefully bloody. The Flathead holdout in the Bitterroot Valley - during their removal in the 1870s - took the form of a peaceful protest, led by Victor's son, Chief Charlot. Much like his father, Charlot remained, throughout his life, a vocal opponent of violence with Americans, and committed to a belief that his peoples' rights and interests could be defended without a resort to warfare. Mining sources for answers as to his and Victor's peaceful inclinations reveals few obvious answers. Though, looking at Flathead interactions in their sum-total, even going back as far as the Corps of Discovery, suggests that many Flathead leaders felt a reasonable sense of comfort in the idea that Americans could ultimately be reasoned with. More broadly, considering the tendency of the Flatheads and their aligned groups to embrace cultural plurality, it seems reasonable to assert that - as a whole - the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation preferred diplomacy to violence whenever possible.⁵³

The 1855 treaty process opened a tenuous middle ground; one that was certainly under threat from the festering problems left unaddressed, but nonetheless opened a profound avenue of communication that curbed the potential for violence between Americans and the Nez Perce, Flatheads, and Blackfeet. The possibility for problems to be resolved at the council circle rather than on the battlefield turned the Flatheads away

⁵³ A Flathead reputation for, and inclination toward, plurality and diplomacy has become a key facet of their history, traced through from the Corps of Discovery forward. This was particularly an important feature of their history to the American officials who dealt with them, including Peter Ronan, a long time Special Agent to the Salish and Kootenais who published a history of the tribes in 1890. See, Peter Ronan, *A History of the Flatheads* (Missoula, MT: Ross and Haines, 1890).

from the prospect of warfare entirely from 1855 onward, it put limits on Piegans' willingness and inclination to fight with the United States, and even did the same with a large portion of the Nez Perce. For their part, many Americans who had moved into the region began to view the treaty nations as "civilized," "peaceful," and "progressive" Indian nations. It is of little doubt that the early influences of missionaries and other acculturating forces, along with intermarriage, already underway, if not prevalent, by the late 1850s, played a key role in shaping American attitudes. At mid-century, American notions of "wild" Indians were largely based in the reports filtering back from the fronts of American conflict with Comanches and Apaches in the Southwest, and Lakotas in the Great Plains. These confederacies seemed to Americans, to be vicious, barbaric, and hostile. By contrast, the treaty nations of the Northwest more closely resembled previous American experiences with Cherokees, Iroquois, and other, more pluralistic and acculturated nations.⁵⁴

Helping to ease tensions and encourage accommodation was the relative remoteness of the interior portion of the Northwest, compared to other American frontier regions in the middle of the nineteenth century. Though the disruptions caused by an initial wave of settlers helped to prompt the 1855 negotiations, for the most part the total "volume" of settlement in what would become western Montana and northern Idaho remained comparably slight until the middle of the 1860s. This delay in settlement

⁵⁴ John Mullan, part of Isaac Stevens' staff in 1855, remained in the Indian administration of the Washington Territory following Stevens' departure, he held a particular attachment to the Flatheads and Kalispels, whom he called his "Mountain Friends," but was also equally effusive in his descriptions of the Nez Perce and Piegans as "noble" and peaceful Indian nations. John Mullan, "Camp at the Four Lakes," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1858* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1858), 280-283.

pressures placed upon the Native Groups of the Northwest gave them a greater amount of time to adjust to the changing world around them.⁵⁵

Combined, these factors, encouraged a brief and tenuous moment of civilizational accommodation. It formed a foundation of dialogue and interaction between Native Peoples and Americans that would shape the course of the next century. For the first time, American settlers entered into the lives of Nez Perces, Flatheads, and Blackfeet as more than transient guests, and Americans and Natives of the interior Northwest had begun the process of negotiating their terms and rights in a newly-emerging world where their civilizations were growing alongside one another. For Natives, in the immediate aftermath of the treaty process, Americans became part of the yearly pattern of their lives. John Mullan, assigned as the Special Agent to the Indians of the Palouse after 1855, claimed that Nez Perces became frequent visitors to American forts and homesteads, trading horses and game for agricultural products and machined goods. In the Flathead and Bitterroot Valleys, as reported to John Owen, a number of Flatheads and Kalispels had, in the years after the treaty, taken up farming, many more adapted to a habit of wintering near the mission at St. Ignatius or near Fort Owen to supplement their diets with rations, making Americans part and parcel of their yearly subsistence strategies. Near Fort Benton, the Piegans adopted a somewhat similar habit, wintering nearby to trade with Americans and collect rations to add to their winter diets.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Robert H. Ruby and John Arthur Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) 57-81, 185-200.

⁵⁶ William Craig, "The Walla-Walla Valley," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1857* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1857), 353-54. R.H. Lansdale, "The Nez Perce Nation," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1857* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1857), 376-377. John Owen, "Camp on the Spokane River," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1858* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1858), 269-271. Also Alfred Vaughan, "Blackfeet Agency," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1858* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1858), 74-83.

Growing pains, of course, existed as well. Adjustment to coexistence was neither a simple, smooth, nor linear process. These early growing pains helped to contribute to the difficulties of the 1870s, wherein the “middle ground” established by the 1855 peace councils closed for a considerable length of time. The fragility of these first overtures seemingly laid in the fact that they were based upon personal relationships forged between (primarily) men whose power and influence were impermanent. As far as the Nez Perces, Flatheads, and Blackfeet were concerned, the federal government of the United States would never again have a representative like Stevens. Frequent turnover among United States Indian Agents seems to have, in fact, been - at least in the case of the Northwest - one of the Office of Indian Affairs’ greatest weaknesses, contributing to an inability to instill lasting peace and order, especially considering just how important Stevens’ interpersonal interactions with headman such as Victor, Lame Bull, Low Horn, and Lawyer had been. For Native Peoples’ own part, and particularly for the headman who frequently dealt with Americans, they assumed and relied upon a certainly level of stability in their relations with Americans that the frequent turnover of agents in the years following Stevens’ departure from the Washington Territory - with their varied attitudes and temperaments - simply could not provide.

Nonetheless the “spirit of 1855” survived the problems that grew out of the councils, and following the tragedies and flashpoints of the late 1870s, then later thrived, as the Palouse Country, the mountain valleys, and the eastern mountain front in Idaho and Montana came out of the end of Nez Perce War into a period of nearly unbroken peace. What is more, by the end of the nineteenth century, the subtle hints of coexistence and adaptation that could be found at the peace councils and their immediate aftermaths

began to spread more generally, and found themselves at the utter foundation of the agencies and reservation communities that in the mid-nineteenth century, were only beginning to come into existence.

Chapter III

Foundations: The Early Agencies and Missions

From the signing of the initial treaties to the turn of the century a sinister pattern developed for Native Peoples of the Northwest. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai nations, the Nez Perce, and the Blackfeet all saw the geographic dimensions of their lives shrink, with the redrawing of territorial boundaries, the arrival of the transcontinental rail lines, and the revoking of off-reservation utilization rights. These events coincided with a breakdown in American-Indian relations that threatened the fragile gains of the 1850s. In the Northwest region, the primary catalyst of change was the discovery of gold, which from the early 1860s brought a flood of American settlers over the trails to the Northern American Rockies and the Columbia Plateau, and put Idaho and Montana on the political map in 1863 and 1864, respectively. The stream of new arrivals put enormous stress on all three Indian nations, and strained their relationship with the United States, pushing some of the Nez Perce to the brink of war.¹

At the same time Catholic missionaries found, and in some cases, forced, their way onto these reservations. In the wider view, Catholics were part and parcel of a more general scramble - on the part of American Christians - to lay claim to the stewardship of Indian souls. They were met by a mixture of hostility, indifference, and fellowship. This began a complex historical role for the Catholic Church, not only on Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce reservations, but throughout the American West. Catholics were certainly

¹ See, Merrill D. Beal, *"I Will Fight No More Forever: " Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963). Also, Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, *In the Name of the Salish and Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Indian Reservation* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 1996). Also, Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

colonizers, and in many ways their efforts benefited from a colonial system that disenfranchised and confined Native Peoples. The federal government, in the early days, provided Catholics and other missionaries with a captive audience, by seeking to restrict movement from reservations and encouraging permanent settlement around schools and churches, often administered by Catholics. Until the 1890s, Catholics received federal contracts for the construction and administration of schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure, and even after the contracts ended, Catholics found other avenues to public monies and influence. Catholics also operated as outsiders to a colonial system that preferred to work with Protestants. Up until the 1880s, Protestants could even use the federal government to block Catholic access to the reservations. Government officials frequently characterized the Catholics in their jurisdictions as truculent and subversive, sometimes even going as far as to label them as too “pro-native,” particularly on matters of language and education. To many Americans in the Northwest, the Jesuit fathers, many of whom were immigrants of Italian, German, or Low Countries descent, were barely more civilized than the “savages” who constituted their flocks.²

The results of these realities thrust Catholics and their Indian congregations into an awkward and difficult-to-define space. They were unequal partners in a power structure arrayed against them. Unequal, because Catholics, despite all of their disadvantages, still help the upper hand in power relations between themselves and Indians. Yet, often enough, Catholics and Indians alike found themselves on common

² For much of the nineteenth century, Catholics remained largely political outsiders in the Northwest, and in the United States more generally. Frequently, Catholics came to be associated with waves of undesirable immigrants who followed the establishment of the Second Industrial System. In the Northwest, Catholics started as a decided minority in towns such as Boise and Lewiston, Idaho, with far larger Protestant and Mormon enclaves. See, Cyprian Bradley, and Edward J. Kelly, *History of the Diocese of Boise, 1863-1952* (Boise, ID, The Diocese of Boise, 1953). See Also, James T. Fisher, *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Also, Wilfred P. Schoenberg, *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1982).

ground pleading against a government working in neither's interest or benefit. This produced a "touch-and-go" relationship developed between Catholic missionaries and Indians, where at times Catholic self-interest closely intertwined with the interests of the native charges of the agency, at other times Catholic voices could become conduits for native complaints, but, unfortunately, at times Catholics could still be less reliable allies than Natives expected them to be.

Tensions between Catholics and government officials at the local level, and deeper tensions between the missionary effort and the Indian Service compelled Catholics to form the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions (BCIM) in 1874. The bureau emerged in response to Ulysses Grant's Peace Policy, which assigned separate reservations to the spiritual charge of various Christian denominations. A perceived and real institutional bias against Catholics prompted them to organize their missionary efforts, in order to more effectively stake claims to native communities where the church possessed interests. The BCIM provided Catholics the means to lobby with the federal government, and place pressure on the Interior Department and congressional Indian affairs committees to be more responsive to the needs and interests of their missions.

Flathead Agency in the Nineteenth Century

When the Jocko River Reservation was created, barely any of the tribes that were confederated under the Hellgate Treaty lived on it. Even a decade after the signing of the treaty, in 1865, only the Kalispels following Chief Alexander made the reserve their permanent home. They resided about sixteen miles northwest of the Washington Indian Superintendency constructed the initial agency site, at the mouth of the Jocko River, on the southern end of the reserve. Virtually all of the Flathead camps still resided to the

south with Chief Victor in the Bitterroot Valley. As for the Kootenais, a band under the leadership of a headman named Eneas lived just north of the Jocko Reservation, on the northern shores of the Flathead Lake. Repeatedly Indian agents attempted to secure a promise from Eneas' band to relocate on the reservation, even offering to build homes and farms for the Kootenais on Crow Creek, 28 miles north of the agency site, without success. Another band of Kootenais, under the leadership of Chief Michel, who had also been present at the Hellgate Council, resided even further north, ranging between Montana, and Canada. In 1865, Flathead Agent Charles Hutchinson reclassified them as British Indians, placing them out of his jurisdiction, and removing them from annuity and ration rolls.³

Jesuits already possessed a presence on the reserve, which was protected by the Hellgate Treaty. In 1854, German Jesuit Father Adrian Hoecken built a small cabin on Mission Creek, which flowed west from the Mission Mountains to the Flathead River, roughly ten miles due east of the agency. By the 1860s the Jesuit fathers had succeeded in converting Alexander to Catholicism, and in convincing a portion of the Kalispels to resettle around the mission site. In 1863, Superior Father Urbanus Grassi, Hoecken's replacement, secured a federal contract to open an industrial school at the St. Ignatius site, which now also included a mill and a farm. By 1864, Grassi had also succeeded in having the Sisters of Providence open a residence at St. Ignatius.⁴

This initial school was ultimately doomed by a lack of enrollment and disputes between Catholics and the reservation agents. In a letter sent to Charles Hutchinson by

³ Charles Hutchinson, "Montana Superintendency," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 240-250.

⁴ Charles Hutchinson, "Montana Superintendency," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 241-242.

Father Grassi, July 26, 1864, Grassi complained that Hutchinson and other agents' inability to induce the treaty Indians to take up residence on the Jocko Reserve, along with the general itinerance of the Kalispels living on the reserve, made keeping the school full almost impossible. Grassi requested funds to establish a boarding school, on the grounds that as long as the Kalispels and others only came to mission and agency for rations, and otherwise moved around the valley to hunt and gather they would pull their children out of the school every time they left.⁵ Hutchinson, however, was in no mood to entertain the priests' requests. In his opinion, the extant school site had been constructed for the purpose of "agricultural and industrial instruction" as well as "the elementary branches of written knowledge."⁶ And as far as he could tell, the fathers were attending to only the final prerogative. Moreover, Grassi had essentially been accepting \$1,800 annual stipend of federal money for the purposes of teaching Catechism and religious instruction. As a result, Hutchinson happily closed the initial school in 1865.⁷

Disputes between the agency and the mission coincided with a growing tension between the agency and the Flatheads living in the Bitterroot. In 1867, Chief Victor brought a formal complaint to Agent W.J. McCormick concerning the encroachments of white farmers on the secondary reserve. According to Victor, whites were fencing in pasture lands. Making matters more complicated was the fact that even in 1867, the Indian Service had still yet to deliver on a promise from the 1855 Treaty, that the metes and bounds of a Bitterroot Valley reserve would be surveyed and closed to whites.

⁵ Letter: Fr. Urbanus Grassi to Charles Hutchinson, St. Ignatius, Montana, July 26, 1864, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 243.

⁶ Charles Hutchinson, "Montana Superintendency," From *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 241.

⁷ Charles Hutchinson, "Montana Superintendency," From *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 241.

Neglect of this promise only further angered Victor, who refused to be pushed to violence if he could avoid it, but who was adamant about seeing the treaty carried through. The Indian Service, and the agents of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation, however, were clearly headed in a different direction: confinement.⁸

In 1865 Hutchinson, acting without consulting Victor, Eneas, or any of the other Flathead and Kootenai headman, but with the blessing of the Jesuit fathers at St. Ignatius, issued a recommendation to the Department of the Interior that all of the treaty of Indians needed to be removed to the Jocko Reserve. Furthermore, he used a skirmish between Kootenais and Blackfeet in the Missouri headwaters, where Eneas' predecessor, Chief Batiste, was killed while the Kootenai were hunting bison in lands guaranteed by the Hellgate Treaty, as a sign of the breakdown in the general peace of 1855 and a pretext for suspending the off-reserve land use rights guaranteed by Stevens. The following year, a delegation of Spokanes following Chief Garry arrived at the Old Agency site and held a council with Hutchinson's successor, Augustus Chapman. The Spokanes informed Chapman that they had as yet not signed a treaty with the United States, but were eager to have one, in order to protect their lands - situated along the Spokane River and Lake Pend d'Oreille in eastern Washington and Idaho - from a stream of American settlers filtering into the region. Chapman instead recommended that Indian Service gain title and land cessions and then remove the Spokanes to Jocko reserve, since they were closely related and spoke a similar dialect to the Salish. Garry refused the arrangement, but some of the Spokanes took residence on lands allotted to them near the Agency and St. Ignatius.⁹

⁸ W.J. McCormick, "Office Flathead Indian Agency," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1868* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1868), 208-215.

⁹ Restriction of hunting rights, Letter: Charles Hutchinson to W.P. Dole (Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dixon, Montana, July 27, 1865, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865*

The matter regarding the Flatheads in the Bitterroot came to a head in 1871, when President Grant issued an executive order commanding the Flatheads' removal to Jocko Agency, and appointing a delegation led by House Representative - and future president - James A. Garfield to negotiate and secure a peaceful removal. Catholic interests cautiously welcomed this turn of events. With the St. Mary's mission languishing, this policy would bring the Flatheads closer within their grasp, push them more toward accepting stationary living. Since it would be spearheaded by the federal government, it was also expected to place only a minimal strain on the good relations the Jesuit fathers had enjoyed with Victor, his son Charlot - who succeeded Victor as the Flatheads' head chief after the later died in 1870 - and the Flatheads more generally.¹⁰

By the early 1870s Catholic influence on the Flathead Reserve was so entrenched that it succeeded in having the Board of Indian Commissioners appoint a Catholic - C.S. Jones - as the Special Agent to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation in 1871. That his administration coincided with the removal of the Flatheads gave Catholics an unusual level of influence over major Indian policy in era more typically dominated by Protestants. It also demonstrated that, at least on matters of confinement, Catholic and government interests closely intertwined, even if they were not absolutely congruent.

(Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 244-245. Charles Hutchinson, "Office Flathead Indian Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 245-250. Augustus H. Chapman, "Flathead Indian Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1866* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1866), 200-201.

¹⁰ Letter: C.S. Jones to Pierre Jean De Smet, St. Ignatius, Montana, November 13, 1872, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives. Also Letter: C.S. Jones to Charles Ewing, Washington, D.C., February 25, 1873, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives. J.A. Viall, "Flathead Agency - Flatheads, Pend d'Oreilles, and Kootenai," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1871* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1871), 413-414.

More than simply seeking to benefit from the situation, however, the issue of Flathead removal had also thrust Jones and the fathers and Sisters of Providence at St. Ignatius into an awkward situation, between their ties and loyalties to Charlot and the Flatheads and their desire for influence with the Indian Service. Jones sincerely hoped to entice Charlot into an agreement to sell the Flatheads' land in the Bitterroot without straining relations too badly. Once Garfield arrived in 1872, though, this quickly became impossible. Charlot approached the negotiations, conducted at the agency, with the priests from the mission bearing witness, hoping that Catholics would back his claims to the protection of the secondary reserve and his demands for follow-through on treaty promises. Neither Jones nor the fathers, however, found themselves in a position to help much, even had they been fully inclined. Correspondence between Jones and the Jesuit fathers of the Northwest Province reveal that he was plagued with a number of other concerns - primarily a strong undercurrent of anti-Catholicism from within the Montana Superintendency - and any influence that he and other Catholics on the reserve had gained could quickly be lost if he was perceived as being uncooperative. In the final calculus for Catholics, continued influence in politics far outweighed Charlot's claim to the Bitterroot.

Among the most difficult political problems Jones faced was a scandal involving the murder of a Kalispel man at the hands of Catholic Indian police officer, Hugh O'Neil. In May 1871, O'Neil had approached the Kalispel man at St. Ignatius, hoping to bring him in as a witness to a whiskey trafficking case. When the individual fled, O'Neil shot him in the back and killed him. The superintendent of Montana Indians utilized the incident as an example of Jones' incompetence, and of Catholic incompetence more

generally, and stated it as a pretext to recommend Jocko Agency's transfer, under the Peace Policy, from the hands of the Catholic stewardship to Methodist care. The whole affair only worsened Jones position in a sectarian skirmish with the Montana Superintendency underway since the day he took office. All through 1872, Jones frequently complained about shipments of flour and other foodstuffs for St. Ignatius being withheld by the superintendency, on the grounds that the mission could not legally distribute government rations, even though by tradition the control and disbursement of rations had been up to the Agent. It quickly becomes clear that the mindset that Jones brought to the negotiations over the Bitterroot was an assessment that anything short of total compliance with Garfield's commission would be grounds for dismissal and a possible revocation of the Catholic missionary claim to the Confederated Salish and Kootenais, out of which the latter outcome was deemed by Jones to be completely unacceptable.¹¹

Garfield offered Charlot the sum of \$55,000 for the Flatheads' remaining land in the Bitterroot Valley. He also offered to designate lands for the Flatheads within the Jocko Reserve, provide supplies for permanent housing, and weekly rations of beef. Charlot refused the offer out of hand. And when he did, Agent Jones "exerted all [his] influence to convince [the Flatheads] of the necessity of their removal from the Bitter Root Valley to this reservation as alike conducive to their own best interests."¹² Charlot, however, would not budge, and refused to sign anything. Ultimately, however, Jones and

¹¹ Letter: C.S. Jones to Pierre Jean De Smet, St. Ignatius, Montana, November 13, 1872. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives. Also Letter: C.S. Jones to Charles Ewing, Washington, D.C., February 25, 1873. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives. Also, Letter: C.S. Jones to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 27, 1872, Washington, D.C. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives.

¹² C.S. Jones, "Flathead Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1872*, 281.

Garfield convinced two Flathead sub-chiefs, Arlee and Adolph, to sign a new treaty. News of this enraged Charlot, who rightly felt betrayed. Matters worsened when the treaty returned to Washington, D.C., with a forged mark next to Charlot's name. Just who ultimately forged Charlot's signature was never sorted out, and the treaty was motioned through for ratification without any investigation into the matter. Even political necessity and expediency, however, could not overcome C.S. Jones' conscience. He declared in a letter to Charles Ewing - then the Catholic Indian Commissioner newly appointed by the Archbishop of Baltimore - that Charlot had never signed a thing.¹³

Nonetheless, the Flatheads' fate in the Bitterroot was sealed. Charlot intended to remain in the Bitterroot Valley for as long as possible, and peacefully protest the Garfield Treaty, and many of the Flathead camps resolved to follow him. The result of the treaty destroyed most of whatever trust and social capital Catholics had accrued with Charlot, and he was now unwilling to talk altogether until the removal order was rescinded. Catholic influence on Flathead, however, had been preserved, and on January 1, 1873, Jones was relieved by another agent, D. Shanahan, who had strong ties and sympathies for the missionaries at St. Ignatius. Work then started, repairing the bridges that Catholics had either damaged or burned with the Flatheads. Agent Shanahan, along with a commission of Jesuit Fathers, including Fr. Lawrence Palladino, traveled from the agency to the Bitterroot to try and smooth over residual anger and restore good relations. While the relationship with Charlot was damaged beyond repair, by all indications they found Arlee and Adolph to be in relatively agreeable moods.

¹³ Letter: C.S. Jones to Charles Ewing, Washington, D.C., February 25, 1873. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 2, Marquette University Archives.

The Flathead sub-chiefs informed the Catholics in April 1873 that they would remove to the Jocko Reservation with 14 families in tow once a proper site had been selected, and that more families would trickle out of the Bitterroot over time as Charlot's firm stance lost influence.¹⁴ Arlee further expressed interest in being provided with the housing that Garfield had promised, and in having access to schools. Arlee and his followers settled on the Jocko Reservation later that year, on land just south of St. Ignatius. To accommodate the arrivals from the Bitterroot Valley, Agent Shanahan oversaw the construction of 21 houses and 140 acres worth of farm fields. Shanahan also lobbied for a new federal contract for St. Ignatius, to the tune of a \$3,000 annual appropriation to expand the educational capabilities of the mission site which in the early 1870s had been reinforced by the Sisters of Charity as well.¹⁵

Arlee's role in this entire affair is a difficult one to gauge, partly because so few of his own words and thoughts from this time period survived. Thus for the most part we are left to speculate as to his motivations for signing the removal treaty and agreeing to the abandonment of the Bitterroot Valley. The principal piece of evidence that has shaped history's memory of Chief Arlee's role in the Bitterroot negotiations is a quotation from Chief Charlot, given to Missouri Senator George Graham Vest, after he learned of Arlee's ascension to the position of Head Chief:

For your Great Father, Garfield, put my name on a paper which I never signed, and that renegade Nez Perce, Arlee, is now drawing money to which he had no right. How can I believe you, or any white man?...we do not wish to leave these lands. You place your foot upon our necks and

¹⁴ D. Shanahan, "Flathead Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1873*, 251.

¹⁵ D. Shanahan, "Flathead Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1873*, 250.

press our faces into the dust. But I will never go to the reservation. I will go to the plains.¹⁶

Arlee is immediately cast into the role of the betrayer and cynic, who sold his home and his chief for personal gain. This is certainly the opinion that Charlot held of him. There are other facts and possibilities, however, that deserve consideration. One that cannot be ignored is the weight and trust Arlee put into the council he received from the Jesuit fathers. Considering Arlee's close ties to St. Ignatius both before and after the removal, it seems probable that Catholics exerted a high degree of influence over his decisions. The other major alternative paints him as less an opportunist than a pragmatist. Revisiting the growing the disputes between Flatheads and Americans in the Bitterroot in the 1860s, and increasing unlikelihood that the Indian Service would ever follow through on its promise to survey the Bitterroot, it is probable and even likely that Arlee came to see holding the valley as a doomed cause, and decided to take the best deal he felt he would get from an Indian Service that proved consistently untrustworthy.¹⁷

Arlee's actions also hint at a recognition on his part that survival demanded adaptation. Dwindling bison herds and an increased effort on the part of the OIA to restrict the movement of hunting parties had rendered older methods of subsistence increasingly difficult to pursue. In many ways, even in the early 1870s the writing was on the wall for the "Old Ways," and virtually all of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai headman would have understood well the cultural dangers of dependency on rations. The basic dynamic taking shape under the new reservation power structure, which at some level Arlee and others must have recognized, was that cultural survival hinged on the

¹⁶ "The Salish Chief's," From St. Mary's Mission Historic Site and Museum Digital Collection, last modified June 7, 2013, <http://www.saintmarysmmission.org/BitterrootSalish-Chiefs.html>.

¹⁷ "The Salish Chief's," From St. Mary's Mission Historic Site and Museum Digital Collection, last modified June 7, 2013, <http://www.saintmarysmmission.org/BitterrootSalish-Chiefs.html>.

independent ability to produce subsistence, independence hinged on an adaptation to intensive agriculture, and this transition required education, training, and resources - things that could be acquired from the agency and the mission, but not by holding out in the Bitterroot. Ultimately, the portrait of Chief Arlee as a calculated pragmatist rather than cynical opportunist probably cuts closer to truth, and is supported further by Arlee, Alexander, and Eneas' obstinance in parting with any more land following the matter of removal.

By the late 1870s Catholics at St. Ignatius possessed the captive audience that Urbanus Grassi had desired in the 1860s. And though it had cost them their relationship with Charlot and the people who still followed him, the majority of the Kalispels and Flatheads now lived near the agency and the mission, and many of them resided in permanent houses around sites like St. Ignatius, Dixon, and the Arlee homestead site. By the 1880s funding - both from private donors and government contracts - had grown to parallel the Salish demand for education and fulfillment for promises of schools and training. In 1884, the Sisters of Providence opened an all-girls boarding school at St. Ignatius, and by 1888 the fathers inaugurated a boy's boarding school. The Ursuline Order of Catholic Sisters arrived at St. Ignatius in 1890, and established a kindergarten that quickly expanded into a girls' day and boarding school. The vast majority of school enrollment in the early days was almost entirely composed of Flatheads and Kalispels who had taken up residence at St. Ignatius or at the nearby homesteads. Most were the children of Catholic converts and the mission congregation, which by the 1880s consisted

of a majority of the families under the leadership of Alexander and Arlee, both of whom were Catholic converts.¹⁸

Eneas' band of Kootenais still largely maintained their distance from Americans. They had moved onto the Jocko Reserve, but primarily resided at its furthest Western edge, along Dayton Creek. Furthermore, Eneas frequently lobbied the agents of the Jocko Reservation to expand its boundaries to include their former homes on the northern shore of Flathead Lake. Such requests fell on deaf ears, and the Kootenai's continued attempts to maintain distance from the permanent settlements earned them a reputation as indigents, particularly in comparison to the Flathead and Kalispel majority residing on the southern arm of the reserve. Agent C.S. Jones characterized the Kootenais as paupers who were "idle, thriftless, improvident, and dishonest."¹⁹ And this was only the start of a pattern, engaged in by the agents and missionaries of the reservation alike, in largely dismissing the Kootenai minority as little more than pack of trouble makers, and in mistaking their desire for independence for insolence.²⁰

Beginning in 1884, military action finished the confinement of bands still not living in the Jocko reserve. Chief Michel's band of Kootenais - who had previously been removed from the agency's list of charges - were placed back under the jurisdiction of Flathead Agency and removed to the reservation. Charlot's stand in the Bitterroot ended in 1891, when troops from Fort Missoula, erected in the Hellgate Valley in 1877 in

¹⁸ In 1954 a history of St. Ignatius was published, providing a basic timeline of the growth of the mission. See, William Lyle Davis, *A History of St. Ignatius: An Outpost of Catholic Culture on the Montana Frontier* (Spokane, WA: C.W. Hill Printing Company, 1954). Also, in 1894, Fr. Palladino published a memoir of his time as the Superior Father of St. Ignatius. See, Lawrence Benedict Palladino, S.J., *Indian and White in the Northwest; or, A History of Catholicity in Montana* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Company, 1894).

¹⁹ C.S. Jones, "Flathead Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1871*, 425.

²⁰ C.S. Jones, "Flathead Indian Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1872* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1872), 280-282.

response to the Nez Perce War and settlers' demands for protection, forcibly escorted him to the Jocko reservation with the remnants of his band, 176 individuals. Charlot defiantly relocated, but refused to accept private land allotments or permanent houses, and stood, rather, determined to adhere to his bands' traditional means of living as best could be managed.²¹

Whereas Catholic influence found itself at the heart of policies that ultimately shaped the Jocko Reservation and removed the Flatheads from the Bitterroot Valley, in the nineteenth century they often found themselves on the outside-looking-in with matters concerning the Nez Perces and Blackfeet. Here, instead, Methodists and Presbyterians claimed spiritual charge of the two nations, and their influence shaped the attitudes of the agencies toward Indians and Catholics alike. Thus the general course of events on these two reservations largely saw Native Peoples fighting their confinement to the reservations at the same time that Catholics sought to fight their way onto them.

Nez Perce Agency in the Nineteenth Century

Whatever hope of a lasting peace with the Nez Perce that was brought about by the treaty councils of 1855 was wiped out by a new treaty, negotiated in 1863, that confiscated reserved lands in Oregon and the far western panhandle of Idaho and threw them open to American settlement. The 1863 treaty was primarily signed by Presbyterian converts who lived at Camp Lapwai, Idaho. The treaty Nez Perce still recognized Lawyer as their head chief. Following the signing of the treaty, the United States built a fort and established an Indian Agency at the site. Many, however, refused to sign the treaty, and

²¹ Robert J. Bigart, "'Charlot Loves His People!' The Defeat of Salish Aspirations for an Independent Bitterroot Valley Community, 1889-1891," *Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 194-217.

the “non-treaty” Nez Perce, as they came to be referred to as, largely consisted of bands that had lived in the western reaches of the former reservation, avoiding missionaries, avoiding government agents, and attempting to preserve their old subsistence strategies. Many of the non-treaty Nez Perces had not even been present at the negotiations, only to return and find that their homes had been sold. Chief Red Heart, who in the early and mid-1860s was considered the head chief of the non-treaty bands, had been in Montana with his kin during the council, hunting and camping with the Crows. Finding that he could not return home, and refusing to remove to the Lapwai reserve, he instead turned to the Flatheads and Chief Victor in Montana’s Bitterroot Valley for asylum. The bands of headman Eagle from the Light and White Bird departed Idaho in 1863 to join Red Heart in Montana.²²

Other non-treaty bands remained in their homes, in defiance to the treaty they refused to sign. Among the headman who refused the 1863 treaty and remained on the lands of the 1855 reserve were Looking Glass, Quil-quil-she-ne-ne, Joseph Big-Thunder (the chief of the Wallowas and father of Chief Joseph), and Toohoolhoolzote, though all still looked to Red Heart as their principal chief. In November 1865, Red Heart, Eagle from the Light, and White Bird returned to Fort Lapwai from Montana to request from Agent James O’Neil that the Indian Service work to remove whiskey traders from their homes. So distant from the agency, however, and off of the reserve, O’Neil hesitated to offer help, requesting instead that the non-treaty Indians remove to reserve where they could be under the protection of the “Great Father.” Red Heart, and others, though, flat out refused, commencing a standoff over removal that eventually culminated in the Nez

²² James O’Neil, “Office Nez Perces Indian Agency,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1866* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1866), 193-195. Also, Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75-122.

Perce War. In an attempt to confine the non-treaty Nez Perce, the Idaho Superintendency commanded that agents withhold rations and annuities from non-treaty bands, and requested that the Montana Superintendency refuse rations for self-exiled Nez Perces in Montana. The later command proved impossible to enforce, and through the 1860s the non-treaty bands continued to draw ample sustenance from the land, making the superintendency's policies so ineffectual that they were eventually reversed.²³

Fr. Joseph Cataldo, an Italian Jesuit who had been active in the Northwest since the late 1840s was the first Catholic to approach the Nez Perce about the prospects of a permanent mission site. He arrived at Lapwai in 1867, but was quickly chased away by the hostility of Presbyterians. Nez Perce converts refused to receive Cataldo, threatened him, and informed him that they had no interest in meddling from an agent of the Roman Church, and ministers at the Presbyterian mission established by Henry Spalding in 1837 had Agent O'Neil remove Cataldo from the reservation. The Jesuit relocated to Lewiston, Idaho, and spent most of the rest of the 1860s ministering to Americans flooding into the town following the discovery of gold along the frontier of the Nez Perce reservation.

Cataldo had the miners help him build a small cabin on the outskirts of Lewiston, out of which he operated until 1869. He supposedly performed his first baptism of a Nez Perce convert in March, 1869. This initial conversion gave Cataldo the headway and boldness to make a second attempt at finding his way onto the reservation and among the treaty Nez Perce. Later in 1869, he abandoned the Lewiston cabin, and by 1871 he operated out of a series of camps and waystations on the Lapwai Reservation, in order to avoid drawing the focused attention and ire of Presbyterians. Over the next three years,

²³ James O'Neil, "The Nez Perce Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1866*, 194.

Cataldo filtered in and out of Nez Perce camps, making small but not insignificant evangelical progress among a population that was either protestant or disinterested in Christianity. His most significant coup from this period came with the conversion of a Nez Perce headman named Zimchilipusse, transliterated as “Slickpoo.”²⁴

Slickpoo’s influence helped Cataldo gain traction, and by 1872 and ‘73 he was pressing for the construction of a permanent mission site, something that Lapwai’s Presbyterian Agent, Joseph Monteith, appointed in 1871, was still loath to grant him. Cataldo, however, took his case directly to the treaty Nez Perce, and claimed that the majority “would give their consent to have the school and the church for the Catholics; and only a few, if any, would deny that privilege to the Catholics.”²⁵ The changing tide of opinion, along with other problems - by the early 1870s headman who supported the non-treaty Nez Perce were actively lobbying the “mission” bands to abandon their private allotments, reject Christianity, and return to traditional living - forced Monteith to relent. In 1874 he issued Cataldo permission to construct a church and school. Unlike St. Ignatius, neither the treaty of 1855 nor 1863 granted Catholics any land on the Lapwai reserve. Cataldo, however, convinced Slickpoo to grant him a seven acre plot, four miles from Fort Lapwai on the newly-named Mission Creek. Cataldo finally dedicated the Catholic St. Joseph’s Slickpoo mission in September, 1874.²⁶

Slickpoo’s band settled around the mission site, and in 1875 another Sicilian Jesuit, Fr. Anthony Morvillo arrived to help Cataldo operate the mission, which consisted

²⁴ Letter: J.M. Cataldo to Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, Washington, D.C., February 10, 1873. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 1, Folder 12 - Ft. Lapwai, Marquette University Archives.

²⁵ Telegram: J.M. Cataldo to B.F. Wiget, Lewiston, Idaho, November 11, 1872. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 1, Folder 12 - Ft. Lapwai, Marquette University Archives.

²⁶ Joseph Monteith, “The Nez Perce Reservation,” from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1874*, 285-286.

of a cabin and small church. The two Jesuits administered a small school, run out of partitioned areas of the church, and used it for instruction in Catechism and written English. The early years of the mission remained unsteady and uncertain. While Monteith had relented to the presence of a Catholic mission, he remained ill-inclined to allow the Jesuits a school contract. The outbreak of the Nez Perce War only two short years later only compounded the uncertainty of the reservation landscape.²⁷

The causes, course, and conduct of the Nez Perce War has been exhaustively examined in other sources, so it is not necessary for me to give it another detailed treatment here. In a general sweep, the non-treaty Nez Perce migration, led by Chief Joseph, White Bird, Toohoolhoolzote, and others did not ignite a larger conflict like the Indian Service and military feared it would. The Nez Perces settled at Kamiah, Lapwai, and Slickpoo, many of whom had taken up private allotments or permanent houses, and who were “in the spiritual charge” of Presbyterians and Catholics, refused to enter the fray. When the non-treaty Nez Perces left Idaho and arrived in the Bitterroot Valley, where they expected a warm welcome from Charlot and the Flatheads resisting their own removal, they, in fact, received a cold shoulder. In council, Charlot refused to embrace Chief Joseph or any of the other non-treaty headman, informing the Nez Perce that despite his own situation, Charlot had no intention to fight the Americans, and asked that the Nez Perce depart quickly before they caused trouble for the Flatheads. Charlot further warned the Nez Perce against harming or robbing any of the American settlers in the Bitterroot, otherwise the Flatheads would join the war against them on the side of the

²⁷ Letter: Joseph Cataldo to Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, St. Joseph's, Idaho, July 10, 1877. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 9, Folder 4, Marquette University Archives.

United States. Even the Blackfeet refused to join the war when the Nez Perce entered their reserve in their final gambit for freedom in Canada.²⁸

Catholics at Slickpoo squarely placed the blame for the outbreak on the government and on Agent Monteith, for their mismanagement of the entire situation, which - in their estimation - drove the non-treaty Indians to war. At the same time, Father Cataldo praised the valor of the Catholic Indians in not only repudiating the actions of the non-treaty bands, but in actively resisting them. In a letter sent to Father Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, relating the commencement of war, Cataldo reported that “no Catholic Indians have joined the hostilities.”²⁹ As General Oliver Howard and the military Department of the Columbia prepared to give chase following the Battle of White Bird Canyon, June 17, 1877, a number of young Nez Perce men, from amongst the ranks of the Catholic Nez Perce living at Slickpoo and Kamiah came to Fort Lapwai to offer their service as scouts. When Howard doubted their loyalty, since many possessed relatives in the non-treaty bands, Fr. Cataldo wrote in support of their fidelity and Howard accepted them. Finally, in late June, a band of Catholic Coeur d’Alenes helped American settlers at Pine Creek repel an attack from Nez Perces that then joined with Joseph’s band. These accounts, coupled with the ambivalence of the predominantly Catholic Flatheads demonstrated at least a powerful correlation between the influence of missionaries and a rejection of the non-treaty Nez Perces’ cause.³⁰

²⁸ Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137-151. Also, “Chief Charlot,” From St. Mary’s Mission Historic Site and Museum Digital Collection, last modified June 7, 2013, <http://www.saintmarysmmission.org/BitterrootSalish-Chiefs.html>.

²⁹ Letter: Joseph Cataldo to Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, St. Joseph’s, Idaho, July 10, 1877. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 9, Folder 4, Marquette University Archives.

³⁰ Letter: Joseph Cataldo to Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, St. Joseph’s, Idaho, July 10, 1877. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 9, Folder 4, Marquette University Archives.

The war's aftermath brought about a turn in the course of events for Catholics. In 1878, a large council of the Christian Nez Perces from Kamiah, Slickpoo, and Lapwai convened to draw up a demand for Agent Monteith's removal, and replacement with a non-denominational military agent.³¹ In 1879, Monteith was removed and over the course of the next decade the Presbyterian near-monopoly over the Lapwai Reserve began to slip away. In 1879, the consistent Presbyterian congregation among the Nez Perces consisted of about 300 individuals split between churches in Kamiah and Lapwai, by 1888, the Catholic congregation at Slickpoo was that same size, and the only remaining Presbyterian missionary on the reserve was Katherine McBeth.³² With mounting private donations coming from within the growing Catholic population in Idaho at cities like Lewiston and Boise, the Jesuits at Slickpoo constructed a rectory in 1888. Though, overall, the Catholic operation on the Lapwai reservation, compared to St. Ignatius, remained quite small and Spartan until the reservation was opened to white settlement at the end of the nineteenth century.³³

Blackfeet Agency in the Nineteenth Century

In comparison to the Flathead and Nez Perce reserves, the Blackfeet's treaty lands remained largely on the most remote edge of early American settlement in the Northwest. After 1855, contact with them was largely restricted to a few interactions that took place between agents and the Piegans and Gros Ventres who periodically visited Fort Benton. The Kainais and Siksikas avoided the fort or ranged north of the international boundary

³¹ Letter: Joseph Giorda to Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, Washington, D.C., August 28, 1878. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 9, Folder 4, Marquette University Archives.

³² Charles Warner, "The Nez Perce Reservation," from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1879*, 56-57. Also, George Norris, "The Nez Perce Reservation," from *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1888*, 85-89.

³³ Letter: George Norris to J.D.C. Atkins, Nez Perce Agency, September 3, 1887, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 18, Folder 24. Marquette University Archives.

into Canada. By 1865, a combination of Indian Service negligence and shifting internal politics, had rendered many of the particulars of the Fort Benton Council, and resultant Lamé Bull Treaty inoperative. Though, according to Indian Agent Gad Upson, assigned to the Blackfeet in the early 1860s, the Piegans and Gros Ventres still upheld their terms of peace with the Flatheads, and the boundaries established by the Fort Laramie Council, the Siksikas and Kainais had more or less abandoned the treaty, being responsible for renewed bouts of violence with Flatheads and Nez Percés hunting bison in their territory.³⁴

Renewed instability thwarted Jesuits' earliest attempts at making inroads into Blackfeet territory, despite the reported success that Father Nicolas Point had enjoyed with the Piegans from St. Mary's Mission in the 1840s. Among the first Catholics to directly approach the Blackfeet on their own reservation was Father Joseph Giorda, who established a small missionary outpost on Ulm Creek, on the frontier of Blackfeet Country, in 1859. Giorda toiled for six years, attempting to build trust and a network of contacts, but this first effort never made it off the ground. Missionary prospects worsened in 1865 when Montana's Territorial Governor, Thomas Francis Meagher, and Blackfeet Agent Gad Upson attempted to negotiate a new treaty that would cede Blackfeet lands along the Missouri River. The treaty was never ratified, but settlers brought by the 1864 Montana Gold Rush - whose epicenter lied just south of Blackfeet Territory near Bannack, Virginia City, and modern-day Helena - flooded onto the lands the treaty would have ceded. This blunder succeeded in angering the Piegans who up to that point had,

³⁴ Gad E. Upson, "Blackfeet Agency, Fort Benton," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1864* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1864), 293-298. Also, Gad E. Upson, "Blackfoot Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 250. Also, William P. Dole, "The Department of the Interior," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1865), 250-252.

more or less, been faithfully upholding their agreements with Isaac Stevens. Violence forced Father Giorda to abandon the Ulm Creek mission in 1866, after an attack by Piegans that killed a mission herdsman.³⁵

Over the next four years, relations between the Blackfeet and Americans continued to deteriorate. Fort Benton organized a militia to respond to “Indian depredations,” and most other outposts and settlements situated along the frontier of Blackfeet Country, on the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers, organized “vigilance committees.” Piegans focused their raiding against settlers who had violated their lands after the abortive 1865 treaty talks. They also severed their ties to the Confederated Salish and Kootenais, effectively nullifying the Lama Bull Treaty. Blackfeet-American relations reached their nadir in 1870, when a group of Piegans camped along the Marias River was massacred by a United States Army detail out of Fort Ellis (near modern Bozeman, Montana).³⁶

The soldiers, under the command of Major Eugene Baker, were dispatched to apprehend a Piegan warrior named Owl Child. The military believed Mountain Child’s Band offered him asylum and that the band was responsible for several attacks on American settlers. The military based the warrant for Owl Child’s arrest on an accusation that on August 17, 1869, he had murdered Malcolm Clarke, an American rancher and trader, married to a Siksika woman, with four mixed-race children. The murder

³⁵ Letter: Fr. Imoda to Fr. Brouillet, Helena, Montana, December 15, 1873, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 1, Marquette University Archives. Also, Phillip Rappagliosi, S.J. and Robert Bigart, ed., *Letters from the Rocky Mountain Missions* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003). Also, Gerald McKeivitt, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848-1919* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 168-174.

³⁶ William B. Pease, “Blackfoot Agency,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1870* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1870), 196-197. Also, George B. Wright, “Fort Benton,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1867* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1867), 253-259.

supposedly occurred after Owl Child had been hosted for a dinner at the Clarke ranch house, after which Owl Child killed Clarke at point-blank range with a revolver, and also severely wounded Clarke's eldest son. Revenge provided the motive for murder, stemming from an altercation dating back to 1867, when Owl Child was blamed for the theft of several of Clarke's horses and publicly beaten in punishment.³⁷

The Piegans camped at the Marias River, however, were not part of Mountain Child's Band, and Owl Child was not present. Instead, the camp was that of another Piegan headman, Heavy Runner, who was well-known by the agent at Fort Benton as a friendly and cooperative chief, whose band was not responsible for any of the depredations taking place on the frontier of Blackfeet Country. Baker approached Heavy Runner's camp on January 22, and prepared to attack at nightfall. One of Baker's scouts, Joe Kipp, a mixed race man with a Piegan mother, suddenly recognized that the camp was not Mountain Child's and shouted for a cease to the attack. Kipp's voice alerted the Piegans to Baker's presence, and as the camp boiled over with frenzied activity, Baker found himself presented with a snap decision; he ordered the scout silenced and issued the command to attack. When the dust settled about 200 Piegans laid dead. Heavy Runner himself was shot through the chest, running towards Baker's men with a note in his hand, guaranteeing his safe conduct, which had been rendered to him at Fort Benton.³⁸

³⁷ Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 181-200. Also, Montana novelist James Welch, born in Browning and raised on the Blackfeet Reservation wrote a novel based on the Blackfeet's oral recollection of the Marias or Baker Massacre. See, James Welch, *Fools Crow* (New York: Viking Press, 1986).

³⁸ Blackfeet historians and genealogists Stan Gibson and Jack Hayne have compiled a number of accounts of just what happened during the Marias River Massacre, with one of the most important accounts being that of scout Joe Kipp. See, Stan Gibson and Jack Hayne, "Witnesses to Carnage: The 1870 Marias Massacre in Montana," *Missing Parts: Notes on a Massacre*, accessed December 17, 2014, <http://www.dickshovel.com/parts2.html>. Also, See, Larry McMurtry, "The Marias River Massacre, January 23, 1870," *Oh What a Slaughter: Massacres in the American West, 1846-1890* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 115-118.

It took two months for Baker to officially file his report on the incident, and the following OIA investigation took even longer. In the end it determined 173 Piegan deaths, out of which the overwhelming majority were the elderly, women, and children. Kipp disputed this number, claiming his own count of the dead numbered 217. Reasons for the incident were determined as alcohol-induced error and subterfuge. Investigators found that Baker had been drinking heavily on the days leading up to the incident and had been drunk at the time that he ordered the attack. Furthermore, accusations were lodged at another scout, Joseph Cobell, who was married to woman from Mountain Child's band, and was believed to have been aware of their whereabouts and conspiring to misdirect the soldiers. Even worse, it was determined that many individuals within the camp were afflicted with smallpox, and attempting to bathe in the frigid winter waters of the Marias River as a means to treat the disease.³⁹

The Army's bungling of the situation, oddly enough though, started Americans and Blackfeet back down the path to peace. Piegan raiding subsided, due to fears of American savagery and the heavy toll a smallpox outbreak had taken on their population more generally. In its maneuvers to save face - Major Baker was ultimately spared a court martial - General William Sherman's command backed off and allowed Indian Service diplomats take charge. By 1874, most of the Piegan headman had reaffirmed their commitment to peace at Fort Benton, and even stated their renewed willingness to accept missionaries onto the reserve.⁴⁰ New-found cooperation paid dividends for both sides.

Methodists were given first access to the Blackfeet reserve in 1873, and built four

³⁹ W.H. Lewis (Seventh Infantry, Special Inspector), "War Department," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1871* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1871), 433. Stan Gibson and Jack Hayne, "Witnesses to Carnage: The 1870 Marias Massacre in Montana," *Missing Parts: Notes on a Massacre*, accessed December 17, 2014, <http://www.dickshovel.com/parts2.html>.

⁴⁰ John Gasman, "Blackfeet Reservation," *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1874*, 259.

churches and six school houses. In 1875, at the request of a general council of Piegan headmen the Office of Indian Affairs and congress succeeded in overturning two Executive Orders, issued by President Grant in 1873 and 1874, that had reduced the size of the Blackfeet Reservation, by shifting its southwest boundaries from the Sun River to the Marias River.⁴¹

The cooling of hostilities reopened the window of opportunity for Catholics as well. In 1876, Jesuits Camillus Imoda and Philip Rappagliesi spearheaded a relocation of the St. Peter's Mission, being administered from Helena, Montana, to the Ulm Creek site. In 1880, another Jesuit, Fr. Peter Prando, established a Catholic outpost just off of the Blackfeet reserve on Birch Creek. Catholic encroachments, however, exasperated Protestant missionaries - both Methodists and Presbyterians were, by 1880, active on the reserve. The brewing dispute culminated in a highly publicized war of words between Father Prando and Joseph Young, the Methodist special agent to the Blackfeet. The confrontation ended with both Prando and Young being removed and reassigned to new posts in 1885. At the same time, however, the publicity, and Prando's charges of an entrenched anti-Catholicism in the OIA brought an outpouring of sympathy and, more importantly, donations from Catholics across the country, allowing the Jesuits to expand their operations. A boys' boarding school was established at St. Peters in 1884, under the charge of Superior Father Joseph Damiani, S.J. In 1890, Damiani also succeeded in gaining Catholics access to the reservation itself, receiving the title to a small plot of land on Two Medicine Creek from White Calf, a Piegan headman whom the fathers at St. Peters had converted to Catholicism. On August 25, 1890, Fr. Damiani along with two

⁴¹ John S. Wood, "Blackfeet Agency, M.T.," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1875* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1875), 299-301.

Ursuline Sisters formally dedicated the Two Medicine Creek site as Holy Family Mission, and - additionally - in 1892 the Ursulines opened a girls' boarding school at St. Peter's.⁴²

The Office of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions

The Catholic gambit to gain a stake in the early reservation system became a two-pronged battle. One that certainly included the efforts of individual missionaries to win over support and converts from local communities, but at the same time necessitated political lobbying for support and recognition from the federal Indian bureau. Much of this national effort came as a response to the inauguration of President Grant's Peace Policy in 1869, instituted as an attempt to turnover some oversight and administrative responsibilities in Indian affairs to religious societies, in an effort to curb the spoils-system-corruption for which the early Office of Indian Affairs was notorious. The primary mechanism of this policy was the creation of the Board of Indian Commissioners, a civilian committee appointed by the President, largely from the leadership of Christian communities, and given the power to review bureau appointments and conduct investigations into bureau business.⁴³

Along with handing over much of the power of oversight for the appointment of agents and investigation of claims to the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Peace Policy era Office of Indian Affairs dismantled the regional superintendencies that had been set up according to the governance of territories and military districts. The Idaho

⁴² Phillip Rappagliosi, S.J. and Robert Bigart, ed., *Letters from the Rocky Mountain Missions* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003). Also, a somewhat dated but thorough history of St. Peters, See, Howard L. Harrod, *Mission Among the Blackfeet* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).

⁴³ Francis Paul Prucha, "Structures of the Peace Policy," *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, Vol. 1 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 501-533.

Indian Superintendency, which, along with the Nez Perce Agency, administered the Fort Hall and Lemhi reservations as well, was abolished by the OIA in 1870, and each of the individual agencies placed under the direct command of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Board of Indian Commissioners. The same occurred for the Montana Superintendency in 1873, which had been responsible for overseeing Flathead, Blackfeet, and Crow agencies. This was done to further curb the military influence over the administration of Indians; it is worth noting that going back to the Andrew Johnson administration elements within the War Department frequently advocated for the re-transfer of the Office of Indian Affairs back under its authority from the Interior Department.⁴⁴

Among the most important policies that affected Catholics was the assigning of reservations to the charge of specific denominations based on their claims to the spiritual care of Indians, and the awarding of contracts and appropriations for the construction of schools and churches. As a general rule of thumb the Peace Policy, and the civilian Board of Indian Commissioners, was for its duration, utterly dominated by Protestants. No Catholic ever sat on the Board of Indian Commissioners until 1902, after the rest of the Peace Policy had already been dismantled. This favoritism, both perceived and real, prompted national Catholic leaders to focus and organize their disparate missionary interests to face a hostile or complacent Interior Department.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Francis Paul Prucha, "Military Challenge," *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, Vol. 1 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 534-561.

⁴⁵ A somewhat dated history of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, see, Peter James Rahill, *The Catholic Indian Missions and Grant's Peace Policy, 1870-1884* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953). Also, Mark G. Theil, "Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records Historical Note/Scope and Content," Special Collections and University Archives, accessed September 4, 2014, <http://marquette.edu/library/archives/Mss/BCIM/BCIM-SC1.shtml>.

In the Northwest, much of that organizing responsibility fell on the shoulders of Fr. Jean-Baptiste Brouillet, S.J., a seasoned Northwest missionary who had been instrumental in seeing the Catholic claim to spiritual guidance of the Umatillas honored by the federal government in 1866. And while the Catholic claim to the Flathead Reservation was too strong as to be ignored - and thus honored under the Peace Policy - on the Nez Perce and Blackfeet reservations, Catholics found themselves shut out. Early in 1870, actually, the Board of Indian Commissioners initially assigned the Blackfeet to Catholic charge, only to reverse this decision a few short months later and reassign the reservation to Methodists. As for the Nez Perces, the Board of Indian Commissioners chose to recognize Henry Spalding's claim to spiritual guidance of the Indians for Presbyterians.⁴⁶

Further motivating Catholics like Brouillet was the perception that the Peace Policy was only being used to restrict access for Catholics to reservations that had been designated for Protestants. While there is no evidence that the Board of Indian Commissioners or the individual agents ever acted as conspiratorially as Catholics believed, bureau actions certainly did very little to reverse or undercut these feelings. For example, agent Joseph Monteith allowed Methodists to construct a school house and church at Kamiah at the same time that he was obstinately refusing Fr. Cataldo's requests to build a Catholic Church on the grounds that the Nez Perce were in the care of Presbyterians. Likewise, on the Blackfeet Reservation, Presbyterians were given access to the Blackfeet reserve shortly after Methodists arrived in 1873. Regardless of intention,

⁴⁶Letters: Jean-Baptiste Brouillet to Ulysses S. Grant, Washington, D.C., May 2, 1866. Oregon Historical Society, Accessed Digitally via the Oregon Historical Project. Also, Letter: Fr. Imoda to Fr. Brouillet, Helena, Montana, December 15, 1873, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 1, Marquette University Archives. Also, Telegram: J.M. Cataldo to B.F. Wiget, Lewiston, Idaho, November 11, 1872. Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 1, Folder 12 - Ft. Lapwai, Marquette University Archives.

the Board of Indian Commissioners and the Office of Indian Affairs gave Catholics the appearance of being an insider's organization, a gentlemen's club that Catholics would never be allowed to join.

Brouillet headed to Washington, D.C., in 1872, hoping to find a sympathetic ear for a laundry list of complaints compiled by himself, other Catholic missionaries in the Northwest, and the bishops of Oregon. The only one he found was that of James Roosevelt Bayley, the new Archbishop of Baltimore, who agreed with Brouillet on the need for a more centrally organized mission effort that could directly lobby the government in the nation's capital. Brouillet and Bayley's meeting ultimately produced the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, created formally in 1874, and designed as a parallel Catholic institution to the Board of Indian Commissioners. The Bureau made getting a Catholic appointed to the Board of Indian Commissioners its primary goal. Beyond that, the BCIM ensured that Catholic interests and concerns were heard in the Interior Department and the congressional Indian affairs committees. The BCIM never achieved an appointment to the commissioners' board in the nineteenth century, but within the first decade of its existence the BCIM had indeed put together an impressive network of informal contacts within the Senate, House, and the Department of the Interior. This allowed the BCIM to effectively challenge their claims to missions in the West that had been denied. On a national scale, at the beginning of the Peace Policy, Catholics claimed rights to schools and churches at 34 of the 80 extant Indian agencies, but had been granted only seven.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 30-71.

Bayley appointed retired General Charles Ewing as the first Catholic Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1874. He served in this capacity until 1883 when he was succeeded by Captain John Mullan, a former member of Isaac Stevens' staff who had helped to negotiate the 1855 treaties. In 1884 the executive directorship of the BCIM passed from lay-commissioners into the hands of appointed priests. Brouillet initially served as a go-between with missions and Ewing following the BCIM's creation, until he was appointed director in 1879, sharing executive responsibility with Ewing. Brouillet then handed the position of director over to another Jesuit, Fr. Joseph Stephan in 1885.⁴⁸

The choice of Ewing as the initial face of Catholic mission interests was an obvious one. He possessed civil service legitimacy and was well connected both in the military and in the government. His father, Thomas Ewing, served James Polk and Zachary Taylor as the very first Secretary of the Interior in 1849 and 1850. Ewing was also the brother-in-law of the supreme commander of the Grand Army of the West, William Tecumseh Sherman, as his sister, Eleanor Boyle Ewing, married Sherman in 1850. Ewing himself was a distinguished veteran of the Civil War, having been commissioned in May 1861 as a Captain in the 13th Infantry, where he served under Sherman - who was then a Colonel. Ewing served under Sherman for most of the remainder of the war, rising as the Inspector-General of Sherman's staff until he was breveted to the rank of Brigadier General in March 1865.⁴⁹

With Brouillet's help as an organizer and advisor Ewing set about raising the Catholic claims to missionary care for the Nez Perces and Blackfeet among others. In

⁴⁸ Mark G. Theil, "Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records Historical Note/Scope and Content," Special Collections and University Archives, accessed September 4, 2014, <http://marquette.edu/library/archives/Mss/BCIM/BCIM-SC1.shtml>.

⁴⁹ Rossiter Johnson and John Howard Brown, "Charles Ewing," *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans* (New York: The Biographical Society, 1904).

regards to Lapwai, Brouillet cited the Flathead delegations to St. Louis in the 1830s as the initial Catholic claim to the region, and not only the Flatheads, because the delegation had requested “Black Robes” not only for themselves, but on behalf of their neighboring and friendly nations, which included the Nez Perces that frequently camped in the Bitterroot Valley. Brouillet and Ewing’s lobbying helped force Presbyterians at Lapwai agency to relent and grant Catholics a mission.⁵⁰ In January 1874, Fr. Brouillet and Charles Ewing submitted their claims to Catholic missionary rights among the Blackfeet to the Grant Administration. Under the claim they cited Fr. De Smet’s placement of the Blackfeet under “the Catholic Church’s spiritual care” established in 1841. The letter further laid out the Blackfeet’s frequent visitation of the St. Mary’s Mission in the Bitterroot Valley throughout the 1840s, and cited Father Nicolas Point’s expedition from St. Mary’s to Blackfeet Country in 1847. Brouillet and Ewing also detailed the establishment of St. Peters, and pointed out that the Blackfeet permanently residing in Canada and the Blackfeet that seasonally traveled to hunt and trade in Canada “[were] attended by the Oblate Fathers of the North” and that “over 2000 of them [were] Catholic Converts.”⁵¹ Finally, they cited the fact that in 1870 the Board of Indian Commissioners had briefly recognized the Catholic claim to the agency, but only three months later reversed their decision, reassigned the agency to Methodists, and appointed a Methodist superintendent.⁵²

⁵⁰ Letter: Jean-Baptiste Brouillet to E.P. Smith, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., November 29, 1875, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 9, Folder 4 - Ft. Lapwai, Marquette University Archives.

⁵¹ Letter: Charles Ewing to the Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., January 15, 1874, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 1, Marquette University Archives.

⁵² Letter: Fr. Imoda to Fr. Brouillet, Helena, Montana, December 15, 1873, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 2, Folder 1, Marquette University Archives.

More broadly, under Ewing and Brouillet's administration, the BCIM challenged the Peace Policy on the grounds that it restricted Indians' religious freedom. This was an entirely self-interested strategy, as not even Catholics believed that Indigenous Peoples' religious freedom extended to the rejection of all missionaries, but it became an effective rhetorical claim to constitutionality meant to break up Protestant monopolies on reservations across the West and the country. This vigorous assault on the Peace Policy placed Catholics at the forefront of a more general shift in public opinion that saw an end to the practice of assigning agencies to specific denominations in 1881. By the early 1880s the sectarian and political landscape of the Office of Indian Affairs was changing dramatically, and increasingly Catholics found a greater measure of acceptance from both public officials and other denominations. This change was due to both the Catholic Church's demonstrated ability to politically organize and to an emerging coalition of civil servants and private citizens that desired to "resolve the Indian question" through an assimilation effort that would require the coordinated efforts of the government and Christian mission organizations.⁵³

In its first decade of existence, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions became both an effective lobby and fundraising organization. In 1875, Fr. Brouillet helped Eleanor Ewing Sherman organize the Catholic Indian Missionary Association, under which Brouillet served as its director and treasurer and Sherman as its public face. The organization operated more or less as the BCIM's bank account until its dissolution in 1887 and replacement with other fundraising drives. The association organized chapters amongst lay women who solicited donations in cities with strong Catholic enclaves

⁵³ Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy Crisis: Christian Reformers and the American Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 132-168.

across the country, such as Washington, D.C., St. Louis, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Most importantly, the association brought Katharine Drexel, the well-to-do heiress of a Philadelphia-based investment banking empire, into the fold of Indian mission donators. Her father, Francis Anthony Drexel, was one of the foremost businessmen in the United States, and her uncle Anthony Joseph Drexel was the founder of Drexel University. Katharine's own path to Native American philanthropy started, like so many others, with the publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881, a scathing criticism of the treaty negotiations and the military's conduct among American Indians. The book appalled her, and her resolve to get involved only hardened after a visit to the Rosebud Reservation in the Dakota Territory in 1884. After her father's death in 1885, she and her sisters donated money to the fledgling Jesuit mission on Rosebud Reservation, St. Francis Mission, and from that time forward Katharine only became more deeply involved. By the end of the 1880s, she had functionally become the "majority shareholder" of the Catholic Church's general mission effort. Although the BCIM successfully courted other powerful donors, Drexel emerged as the leading figure, personally donating much of the \$15.5 million fortune she and her two sisters inherited from their father.⁵⁴

As for the changing climate of Indian governance, in the 1880s the Peace Policy gave way to a group of government officials, philanthropists, and religious leaders who

The reports of the BCIM also reveal the financial importance of Drexel to the organization. See, Joseph Stephan, S.J., "Report of the Director to the President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions for the Year 1891-1892," Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs Archive, Summaries of Work Completed and Records Relating to Mission Schools, Volume 1. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, Cheryl D. Hughes, *Katharine Drexel: The Riches-to-Rags Life Story of an American Catholic Saint* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014). Also, Amanda Bresie, "Mother Katharine Drexel's Benevolent Empire: The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Education of Native Americans, 1885-1935," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 32 (2014), 1-24.

demanded a more humane solution to the “Indian Question.” In some ways the Peace Policy itself had paved the way for this shift, introducing the voice of missionary interests to the governance of the Indian agencies and loosening the military’s grip on the situation. Helen Hunt Jackson’s activism against the excesses of the Peace Policy - the sectarian bickering and the misadministration of the military - highlighted by disasters like the Marias River Massacre and the Nez Perce War in the late 1870s and early 1880s not only made her a national celebrity, but also pushed the national conversation about Indian administration toward the implementation of policy that would simultaneously settle the question of the relationship between the United States and Native Peoples while seeking to right past wrongs.⁵⁵

The course of action that possessed overwhelming support by the middle of the 1880s among politicians, activists, Department of the Interior officials, and Christian leaders was a general allotment of private property on the extant Indian reservations. Reformers modelled the plan after smaller allotting practices already taking place among mission communities on some reservations. Reformers also favored the expansion of church and school infrastructure, along with the opening of a pathway to citizenship for tribes and tribal members. This shift in attitudes formally gave Catholics a seat at the table. Catholic representatives were invited to the Lake Mohonk Conferences, held in upstate New York beginning in 1883, where many of the particulars of a general allotment plan were hammered out.⁵⁶ More importantly for Catholics, the changing tide

⁵⁵ Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government’s Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 1881). The influence of Helen Hunt Jackson, see, Valerie Sherer Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879-1885* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ The Lake Mohonk Conferences of the Friends of the Indian, first convened in 1883, served as a virtual “think tank” that incubated the reforms to Indian policy of the late nineteenth century. The conferences were attended by a mixture of secular reformers, like Helen Hunt Jackson, representative of Christian

opened greater access to federal appropriations. Unsurprisingly, most of the building and expanding that took place at St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, and Holy Family missions in the Northwest, coincided with an infusion of federal dollars, and it gave the Catholic Church a secured line to funding in the form of student tuition vouchers and school contracts.⁵⁷

Conditions between the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and Office of Indian Affairs, however, did not remain cozy for long. Though the church had effectively demolished the hurdles blocking their access to reservations, further federal appropriations came under threat not long after unrestricted access to them had been gained. In 1889, Benjamin Harrison appointed Thomas Jefferson Morgan the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Morgan opposed school contracts out of principle, feeling instead that the matter of Indian education was better left to the Indian Service schools. Though he lacked the power to categorically cut the flow of money, he stated his intent to allow contracts with religious societies expire and not renew them.⁵⁸

missionary organizations, Senators, House Representatives, and officials from the Indian Service and the Department of the Interior more generally. All of the conferences attendees possessed a shared desire for reform, including an end to removals, and the "ration and annuity" system of reservation management. See, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings of the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Also, Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

⁵⁷ Though no official pipeline for Catholics to gain access to federal funds ever existed, the BCIM could find ways to have sympathetic Senators and Congressman, such as Missouri Senator George Graham Vest, who served on the Senate Public Health Committee write in amendments to appropriations bills to expand the school infrastructure of the missions. For example, in 1885, St. Ignatius, which ran a day school for 150 pupils, was able to gain public money to expand. Letter: Charles Lusk (Secretary of the BCIM) to Senator George Graham Vest, Washington, D.C., January 26, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 15, Folder 7, Marquette University Archives. Also, Letter: Charles Lusk to John D. C. Atkins, Washington, D.C., March 11, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 15, Folder 7, Marquette University Archives. Also, Letter: Charles Lusk to Fr. Palladino, S.J., Missoula, MT, April 11, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 15, Folder 7, Marquette University Archives. Letter (Concerning funding for St. Ignatius): George Graham Vest to Joseph Stephan, Washington, D.C., January 15, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 9, Marquette University Archives.

⁵⁸ Joseph Stephan, S.J., "Report of the Director to the President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions for the Year 1891-1892," Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs Archive, Summaries of Work Completed and Records Relating to Mission Schools, Volume 1. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Morgan's combative stance with the mission schools, and with Catholics more generally, disrupted a marriage between the church's and government's purposes during the late-nineteenth-century push for Indian assimilation before it could ever really take shape. Fr. Joseph Stephan, S.J., who succeeded Father Brouillet as the director of the BCIM in 1885, took Morgan's appointment to the Indian Service as an opportunity to push Catholic Indian missions in a new direction, away from federal support and instead seeking to support Catholic proselytizing independently. Deep-pocket donors and supporters like Katharine Drexel made this shift possible.

The Church and the Government at the Agencies and Missions

At a local level, personal relationships influenced conditions between Catholics and the appointed officials of the reservations. This produced a mixture of disputes, hostilities, and remarkable instances of cooperation dependent upon the attitudes and actions of the personnel - both religious and civic - involved. Tracking the local dealings of missionaries with federal officials through the end of the nineteenth century reveals what the full potential range of relations between the church and the OIA on matters of Indian administration could be. At the same time the church and the government could be one another's staunchest allies and most bitter foes.

While many of the same issues confronting local communities similarly concerned both missionaries and government officials, Catholics tended to be frequent and ardent critics of the Office of Indian Affairs' enforcement methods and, particularly, the tendency of agents to punish "anti-social" behavior by exacting fines against individual Indian's annuity shares.

In case [sic] of drunkenness, for instance, family troubles, adultery, fighting, gambling, etc., it is the Agent that dictates the punishment. He usually punishes [sic] by fines and so has a good chance to make some money. In this way the authority of the Chiefs, is entirely destroyed, to the great detriment of their people.⁵⁹

More generally, Catholic missionaries tended to find frustration with the faceless bureaucracy of the individual agencies, and - more than that - became a conduit and voice for the frustrations of individual native people in dealing with - what at times could appear to be - the capriciousness of government agents.

Several Indians of my camp [Slickpoo] were even refused harnesses for their horses. The Agent said that if they would not stop complaining he would send the Catholic Priest [away] and leave them without a Catholic Missionary.⁶⁰

Specifically, such frustrations persisted on the Lapwai Reservation even after the removal of Agent Montieth, following his disastrous handling of the situation with the non-Treaty Nez Perce in the lead up to the Nez Perce War. The appointment of Charles Warner - a non-sectarian man, with a spotless administrative record in the Indian Service - as Lapwai's Agent in 1879 proved to be but a temporary measure, and little more than a slap on the wrist for Montieth, who - at the end of the Peace Policy, in 1882 - regained the appointment as the Special Agent to the Nez Perce, and rejoined his combative relationship with Cataldo and the other fathers of St. Joseph's.

Catholics at Slickpoo, of course, strongly opposed his reassignment, and frequently complained about the excesses of his administration. The priests of St. Joseph's, including the Superior Father, which remained Cataldo - a capacity to which served until 1893, emerged as harsh critics of the agency's treatment of its Nez Perce

⁵⁹ Letter: Fr. A. Michels to President Grover Cleveland, Lewiston, Idaho, November 3, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16. Marquette University Archives.

⁶⁰ Letter: Fr.. A. Michels to President Grover Cleveland, Lewiston, Idaho, November 3, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16. Marquette University Archives.

charges. Among the list of grievances lodged against Monteith (who continued to serve despite protest from Cataldo and the BCIM until 1889) were capricious and punitive maltreatment of Indians, and particularly of the non-treaty bands that had been given leave to return to Idaho following the Nez Perce War, and a general culture of corruption from within the Agency. The punitive actions to which Catholics specifically took issue included an array of arbitrary actions like the one cited above, in which Monteith refused aid or action to certain Indians. Monteith also frequently withheld rations or annuity shares from Nez Perces for a wide range of supposed offenses, including drunkenness, loitering, and gambling. As for corruption, Catholics accused Monteith of utilizing a wide range of fines, exacted most often for petty and otherwise ridiculous charges - one of which was "indigence" - which they alleged were primarily being used to line the pockets of the federal agency employees. Additionally, Monteith seemingly neglected to collect grazing fees from non-Nez Perce ranchers, to such an extent that by the time he was relieved of duty in 1890, unauthorized stock on the Lapwai Reservation had become a significant economic and environmental problem.⁶¹

Most grievously, though, from Catholic's point of view, was - what they perceived at least - a continued sectarian hostility toward Catholics on the part of Monteith and his agency staff. The most specific target of Monteith's bias, according to the priests of St. Joseph's, became the Catholic Nez Perces who settled or camped near Slickpoo, which still even by the mid-1880s, was a relatively small minority population

⁶¹ Objections to Monteith's continued service, Letter: Joseph Cataldo to John Mullan, Lewiston, Idaho, November 14, 1885, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16, Marquette University Archives. Also, a long and detailed list of grievances against Monteith were sent in a letter by Fr. A Michels, an associate of Cataldo's, to President Cleveland. Letter: : Fr. A. Michels to President Grover Cleveland, Lewiston, Idaho, November 3, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16. Marquette University Archives. The problem of unauthorized stock, Warren D. Robbins, "Report of Nez Perce Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1891* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1891), 233.

on the Nez Perce Reservation: about 300 of the 1,437 individuals reported to be living on the reservation.

The Present Agent [Monteith], who shows his prejudices against the Catholic Church by the manner he treats the Catholic Indians. He hardly notices them, while the Methodists and other Protestant Indians get all they ask for.⁶²

According to the priests, Monteith's "bullying" extended to the denial of rations for Catholic Indians, along with an alleged assortment of threats, including the removal of Catholics from Lapwai Reservation. In 1885, he denied Catholics at Slickpoo materials for the construction of additional housing, that had initially been promised by Charles Warner, which prompted a petition from the BCIM, at the urging of Cataldo, sent to the President asking to have Monteith removed. Further allegations of sectarian favoritism, that Monteith was allotting lands and resources to Presbyterians, generated an investigation from the OIA in 1887, but the claims were never substantiated.⁶³

The full extent of Monteith's actions in the 1880s remains difficult to determine, as the possibility of Catholic exaggeration in the claims against him - given the already sordid history between himself and Cataldo in particular - cannot be ruled out. Corruption issues, particularly the excessive use of fines and the allowance of non-Nez Perce stock onto the reservation appear to have been real problems, based on the reports of Monteith's successor. Regardless, the rift between government officials and Catholic missionaries on the Lapwai Reservation was real, and caused serious problems to the

⁶² Letter: Fr. A. Michels to President Grover Cleveland, Lewiston, Idaho, November 3, 1885, The Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16, Marquette University Archives.

⁶³ Census data, "Statistics Relating to Population," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1885* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1885), 342. Petition for removal of Monteith, Letter: Charles Lusk to Grover Cleveland, Washington, D.C., December 5, 1885, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 14, Folder 16. Investigation of affairs at Lapwai, Letter: Special Agent George Norris to John D.C. Atkins, Lapwai, Idaho, September 13, 1887, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 18, Folder 24, Marquette University Archives.

administrative health of the reservation as a whole. Furthermore, the Catholic claim that Monteith's excesses and corruption eroded the authority of the Chiefs and the tribe to police their own people seems to have some basis in fact, considering some the grave civic problems that Lapwai carried forward into the next decade and the twentieth century. By the end of Monteith's tenure, a quarter of the Lapwai Reservation's small population remained in part or wholly dependent on rations. Illegal liquor sales presented a serious problem, as did a general lack of infrastructure. St. Joseph's did not benefit from the hostility either, as by the end of Monteith's tenure, it remained a quite small outpost, still lacking a permanent school site, or any other amenities beyond a small church and priest's residence.⁶⁴

On the other hand, certain agency administrations worked quite amicably with the Catholic missionaries. Missionaries worked well with agents who were - themselves - ill-inclined toward sectarian pettiness and willing to give Catholics a say in the management of the reservation's affairs. A prime example was the administration of Peter Ronan, appointed Special Agent to the Flathead Indian Reservation in 1877, and serving in that capacity until his death in 1893. Like his predecessors, appointed under the terms of the Peace Policy, Ronan was often inclined to coordinate efforts with St. Ignatius, and his friendliness toward the mission, coupled with his tendency to seek the priests' council - particularly on matters of appointments - fostered a productive working relationship between the mission and the agency under the years of his tenure, which were lengthened, in no small part, due to extensive lobbying for his continual re-appointment

⁶⁴ "Table on Population, Civilization, Religious, Marital, Vital, Criminal Statistics," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1890* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1890), 452.

by the Superior Fathers of St. Ignatius (Fathers Palladino and Van Gorp, S.J. during Ronan's administration) through the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.⁶⁵

Ronan's tendency to appoint agency employees who had a working relationship with the missionaries at St. Ignatius and who often came with the written or verbal recommendations of the missionaries themselves, helped the Jocko agency from 1877 to 1893 avoid much of the bureaucratic gridlock that so often frustrated other missionaries on other reservations or under other administrations. Furthermore, good working relations with St. Ignatius gave Ronan the ability to combine church and government resources to expand the quality of services that could be rendered to the agency's Salish and Kootenai charges. In this fashion, on the Flathead Reservation, St. Ignatius turned into more than an evangelical outpost, working alongside the agency to provide an additional social and economic safety net. Working with both the Department of the Interior and with the BCIM, Ronan and Fathers Palladino and Van Gorp secured a combination of federal and private funds to provide clothing, additional food rations, and temporary shelter for needy individuals at St. Ignatius. By the end of Ronan's administration, the capabilities of St. Ignatius expanded to include dormitories for care of the reservation's orphans (which were almost exclusively placed under the care of the Jesuits and the Sisters of Providence

⁶⁵ Ronan frequently sought the advice of Palladino and Van Gorp when needing to fill agency positions such as physicians, veterinarians, blacksmiths, and other skilled jobs. Together Ronan and the priests sought to ensure that the agency was manned by people from the surrounding communities (particularly, Missoula, Montana) whom were well known by the Indians on the reservation, and who had a reputation for fair treatment of Indians. Letter: Fr. Palladino, S.J. to John Mullan, St. Ignatius, Montana, March 25, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 15, Folder 7, Marquette University Archives. When Ronan came up for re-appointment in 1885, Father Van Gorp wrote the BCIM to ensure that his re-appointment came from the Department of the Interior. Letter: Fr. Van Gorp, S.J., to John Mullan, St. Ignatius, Montana, November 13, 1885, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 15, Folder 7, Marquette University Archives.

at the mission), a hospital administered by the Ursulines and the Sisters of Providence, and an industrial and trade school that included training for adults.⁶⁶

The environment of mutual cooperation between the government and the mission proved to be a boon for everyone, including - most importantly - the Confederated Salish and Kootenais. The boarding capacities of the schools at St. Ignatius included 150 spots for boys and an additional 75 seats for girls at a school run by the Ursulines and the Sisters of Providence. Furthermore, two day schools at St. Ignatius served the majority of Catholic families situated in the primary settlement sites: around the mission, around the Agency at Dixon, and at the Arlee homestead site. Catholic Indians, furthermore constituted a solid majority of each of the town sites, and were estimated to make up roughly two-thirds of the total Flathead and Kalispel population on the reservation. In addition, Ronan worked throughout the 1880s to expand the housing available in the town sites, and by the end of Ronan's tenure most of the grasslands along the Jocko and Flathead Rivers had been converted into farm fields.⁶⁷

While pressing the Kootenais to agree to find a permanent settlement site (during the whole of Ronan's tenure Chief Eneas' band continued to live, predominantly on the western edge of the reservation) and doing the same with the remnants of Chief Charlot's

⁶⁶ Letter (concerning appropriations for clothing and food to provided to St. Ignatius): L.Q.C. Lamar (Secretary of the Interior) to Joseph Stephan, S.J., Washington, D.C., January 7, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 9, Marquette University Archives. Also, Letter (concerning Ronan's request of funds for St. Ignatius): George Graham Vest to Joseph Stephan, S.J., Washington, D.C., January 7, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 9, Marquette University Archives. Also, Peter Ronan, "Report of Flathead Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1889* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1889), 227-331.

⁶⁷ Letter (Report on St. Ignatius): Peter Ronan to John Mullan, Dixon, Montana, February 1, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 9, Marquette University Archives. Peter Ronan, "Report of Flathead Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1889* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1889), 227-331. Peter Ronan, "Report of Flathead Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1891* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1891), 277-279.

Band, who were removed to a sub-agency on the Flathead Reservation in 1891, Ronan refused to go so far as to withhold rations, which was a common standard practice throughout the OIA in the late-nineteenth century. While Catholic influence in this decision is impossible to prove, it remains - nonetheless - feasible and even likely, considering the close relationship of Ronan to Palladino and Van Gorp, along with the priests' (and the Jesuits' more generally) opposition to the withholding of rations. Meanwhile, the Flathead and Kalispel majority on the reservation, had, by 1891, become largely self-sufficient. Of the 1,556 Flatheads and Kalispels living on the reservation in 1891, ninety percent were deemed by the OIA to be completely subsistence independent, with the other ten percent being in need of rations only to supplement their diets. Meanwhile, only 8 percent of the reservation's total population (about 1,750 souls in 1891), were considered to be almost entirely dependent on rations, with the majority of those coming from the Kootenai minority.⁶⁸

The sum result increased the independence of the majority of the reservation's population, while simultaneously expanding the agency and mission's capability to assist the poor. By the 1890s Flathead Agency had ample resources to support a general quality of life that - by any measure - was still relatively meager compared to white communities, but that still far outpaced the vast majority of other Indian agencies in both the Northwest and throughout the United States. Flathead Agency under Ronan, furthermore, was perhaps among the most economically stable reservations in the entire United States on the cusp of the Allotment era. Ronan died as one of the most well-loved Indian agents in

⁶⁸ "Tables on Population, Civilization, and Religious, Vital, and Criminal Statistics," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1891*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1891), 78-79. On the practice of withholding rations, see, Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 115-146.

the Reservation's history, and before his internment in Missoula he was honored by a gathering of the Salish and Kootenai chiefs at St. Ignatius. Even Charlo, whose relationship with whites remained quite rocky over the Bitterroot controversy, came to pay his respects to the beloved agent, and a newly formed settlement site, developed by the OIA near St. Ignatius was renamed from Spring Creek to Ronan Springs, in his honor (eventually just, Ronan, the modern town site). Ultimately, his administration demonstrated the potential of what civic and religious cooperation could produce.⁶⁹

Likewise, the removal of Agent Young from Blackfeet Agency in 1885, due to his publicized feud with Fr. Prando, ushered in a growing climate of cooperation between federal agents and the Catholic missionaries. Most specifically, Agent M. D. Baldwin, Young's replacement, began to make further use of Catholic schools, and specifically of the Jesuit's off-reservation mission school, St. Peter's. While Catholics finally established Holy Family Mission on the reservation itself in the 1890s, from 1886 onward, and with the blessing of Baldwin, Fr. Damiani, the Superior Father of St. Peter's, secured permission to remove enrolled Blackfeet boys from the reservation, and board them at the mission school. Furthermore, Blackfeet agency secured a line of federal funding for the mission, having the Secretary of the Interior (L.Q.C. Lamar in 1886) authorize the payment of vouchers for the cost of boarding, clothing, and feeding Blackfeet children at St. Peter's. While the developing boarding school largely served

⁶⁹ Joseph T. Carter, "Report of Flathead Agency," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1894* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1894), 173-177. Also, Ronan, himself authored his own history of the Flathead Reservation, up to and through his own administration. See, Peter Ronan, *History of the Flatheads* (Missoula, MT: Ross & Haines, 1890). Also, Robert Bigart, *Justice Be Accorded to the Indians: Agent Peter Ronan Reports on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana, 1888-1893* (Pablo, MT: Salish and Kootenai College Press, 2014).

Piegán Catholic converts, Damiani also coordinated with Baldwin to take charge of the care for orphans from the agency and from Fort Benton.⁷⁰

The developing report between Catholics and agency administrators proved to be a vital lifeline of funds for Damiani's still-fragile operations at St. Peter's and Holy Family. While the money was never enough to free the Catholic missions to the Blackfeet from the constant uncertainty of living "hand-to-mouth," (and in reality, all of the Catholic operations in the Northwest, even the most securely disposed ones such as St. Ignatius, lived month to month on uncertain budgets) it was enough to keep the churches and schools open. Furthermore, the vouchers, which by 1886 were being employed extensively by Blackfeet Agency, and to some degree on virtually every other reservation with a Catholic missionary presence, emerged as a fascinating work-around to the Office of Indian Affairs' decision to choke-off the sources of public money coming to evangelical organizations in the form school contracts. Rather than making a direct appropriation, agents and the Indian Service began to redirect money from tribal funds to compensate missions, such as St. Peter's, for enrolling and boarding Indian students according to the estimated cost required for the government to board and educate students itself. For example, in 1887-1888, the OIA paid out \$6,100.00 to St. Peter's in vouchers, a sum, which, adjusted for inflation, was the virtual equivalent of the direct appropriations given out in contracts to other Catholic schools in previous decades.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Letter: Joseph Stephan, S.J., to Joseph Damiani, S.J., Helena, Montana, February 11, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 12, Marquette University Archives. Letter: Joseph Stephan, S.J., to John D. C. Atkins, Washington, D.C., July 23, 1886, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 17, Folder 12, Marquette University Archives.

⁷¹ Concerning the payment of vouchers by the OIA to the BCIM, Letter: Joseph Stephan, S.J. to J. Damiani S.J., Washington, D.C., May 19, 1888, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 21, Folder 21, Marquette University Archives.

The influx of funds from federal vouchers provided a hedge against the uncertain reality that the Catholic missionary effort was otherwise dependent upon donations, and that, therefore, the BCIM could not provide individual missions a reliably predictable budget on a year-to-year basis. The security that this offered was, nonetheless, limited, and up to and through the turn of the twentieth century Catholic's position remained precarious, particularly on the Blackfeet Reservation, where both church and public resources were spread to their breaking point. In 1898, the OIA reported a population of 2,022 individuals living on the Blackfeet Reservation (following a sharp decline in population due to the disease epidemics of the 1870s, the reassignment of the Gros Ventres to Fort Bellknap, and the reassignment of most of the Kainais and Siksikas to Canadian jurisdiction), of which half of the reservation was reported to be in need of nutritional support, and out of those, half - about 500 individuals - were considered fully dependent upon government support and rations, which was a massive burden placed upon the \$6,617.87 in interest earned on the Blackfeet's tribal trust and the OIA's limited budget. Church resources reached their limits a decade later, in 1908, when a fire destroyed the Jesuit's trade school at St. Peter's, prompting them to remove most of their activities to Holy Family, which was now closely located to the reservation's new agency headquarters at Browning. The BCIM lacked funds to repair St. Peters, which went into decline, closing permanently in 1918 after a second fire destroyed the Uruslines' girls' boarding school.⁷²

⁷² "Statistics Relating to Population," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1898* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1898), 599. Also, "Trust Funds and Trust Lands," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1898* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1898), 555.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the political, geographic, and human landscape of Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet reservations had settled into some semblance of relative stability following the half century of rapid and radical changes that had been brought about by the initial treaty councils and their aftermaths. Following the removals of 1863 and 1872, the boundaries of the Flathead and Nez Perce reserves stabilized. In 1888, congress split up the massive reserve, north of the Missouri River, shared by the Blackfeet, Assiniboines, and Gros Ventres into three smaller agencies, placing the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres onto the Fort Belknap and Fort Peck Agencies, and creating a new eastern boundary of the Blackfeet Reserve at Dupuyer Creek. Finally, in 1896, the western strip of the reserve, modern Glacier National Park, was purchased from the tribe's protected lands by the Department of the Interior. This last transaction settled the modern boundaries of the reserves in Western Montana and the panhandle of Idaho.⁷³

By the turn of the twentieth century, too, the Catholic Church had an established presence and purpose on the three reserves. The efforts of Superior Fathers Palladino, Cataldo, and Damiani, and the associate priests and Catholic Sisters who toiled along with them, in establishing Catholic communities at St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, and Holy Family, passed on to a new generation of caretakers and administrators. The missions, once small frontier outposts, were now, too, integrating into the growing network of Catholic Dioceses, which by the twentieth century had been established for Idaho in Boise - which became the capital of the state in 1890 - and for Montana in Helena - which became the state capital in 1889. The goal then shifted beyond simply seeking a

⁷³ On the changing boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation, see, Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

growing community of converts on the reservations themselves, but to integrate the missions with the fledgling Catholic parishes being established in the major neighboring non-Indian communities, like Lewiston, Idaho, and Missoula and Helena, Montana.

The tribes themselves were transitioning, as well, into the new realities of modern life, coalescing into rural and agrarian communities at the emerging town sites like Lapwai, Kamiah, Slickpoo, St. Ignatius, Jocko, Arlee, and Browning. By the turn of the twentieth century many of the traditional subsistence and economic strategies that had patterned life before and in the immediate aftermath of the treaties were disappearing. Even on the Blackfeet Reservation, where activities like subsistence hunting remained the most firmly entrenched, it was fading as a primary way of life for all but a quarter of the agency's population. On the Flathead and Nez Perce reservations, migratory subsistence hunting and gathering remained a chief staple of livelihood for only a slim minority of the population. Agriculture was already a growing industry on each of the reservations. By 1898, about 100,000 acres of the Lapwai Reservation had been enclosed for the purposes of grazing, and nearly 10,000 acres dedicated to the cultivation of crops. Likewise, on the Flathead Reservation there existed 10,000 acres of enclosed farmland, and most of the Flathead River Valley had been established as an open range for cattle grazing. The Blackfeet Reservation lagged far behind, but by 1898, atill fenced off 37,000 acres of grazing lands and 1,000 acres of crop fields, situated near Browning. This transition undertaken by Native Peoples, and the varying experiences that it produced will form the primary focus of the following chapter.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ "Table of Statistics Relating to Cultivation of Indian Lands," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1898* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1898), 616-630.

The General Allotment Act, signed into law in February of 1887, cast a shadow of doubt over the tenuous equilibrium then taking shape on these reservations at the dawn of the twentieth century. The general allotment policy had been explicitly designed in the Senate to accelerate an evolution in Native Peoples' subsistence strategies that was clearly already underway even a decade or more before the policy took effect for these three tribes. It is arguable, though, that allotment - despite its intentions - actually disrupted and slowed an economic transition already happening, and added suffering and difficulty to a process that would have been better left to play out organically, on a local level, and based upon the developing relationships between Native Peoples and the non-Indians who were fast becoming important fixtures of their worlds. This argument will be further explored in chapter five. Despite the uncertainty and the shifting winds of federal policy that have always characterized American-Indian relations, by 1900 the "frontiers of contact" between Native Peoples, federal officials, and religious agents were closed. Indians, Americans, and their respective institutions, were now all constituent members in landscape that bound them all together.

Chapter IV:

A Crossroads of Civilizations: Into the Era of Allotment

On the 21st of January, 1918, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells received a short letter from Idaho's Republican Congressman, Burton L. French. The note contained a complaint from Otis Halfmoon, an enrollee and allottee on the Lapwai Reservation, concerning several Nez Perce and Umatilla men living in polygamous marriages on the Lapwai and Umatilla Reservations. Lastly, the letter stated that if the OIA cared to investigate further into the matter - which Halfmoon certainly hoped they did - then an agent or inspector was to contact either Halfmoon or Edward Cashcash on the Nez Perce Reservation, or Billy Joshua, an enrollee on the Umatilla Reservation.¹

The seemingly insignificant note, one of the thousands that came across Sells' desk on a daily basis from the 140 Indian agencies and from congressional offices across the country, can easily be lost in a wash of mundane requests that made up a significant chunk of the Office of Indian Affairs' day-to-day business. It likely received no more attention than hundreds of other complaints concerning an array of topics that stretched from the nit-picky to the ludicrous. Yet, the letter, which is barely three sentences long, opens a window onto the shifting social and cultural dynamics found on the early-twentieth century Indian reservations in the generation following the experience of contact and confinement for Indians in the American West. It raises a number of questions and insights about the structure of these communities that often go unexplored or ignored.

¹ Letter: Burton L. French to Cato Sells, Washington, D.C., January 19, 1918. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 205, Folder 5133-18. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

It, first and foremost, points to the obvious imperial goals of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Indian policy, which sought to reshape the tribal cultures of the Indian agencies to the mold of American concepts of law, community, family, and morality. Why else would polygamous Indian marriages be a matter of concern for a congressman and federal official? More importantly than that, though, the letter bears evidence of an emerging collection of native people, living on the reservations, who had more or less adopted some of these American values as their own. Enough so, that individuals such as Halfmoon felt compelled to root out behaviors - such as polygamy - they found morally and legally offensive to their own sensibilities.

Digging deeper, we find that Mr. Halfmoon, along with the other two contacts he provided to the OIA, Edward Cashcash and Billy Joshua, were all Catholic or Christian converts, and active members of their tribal councils and governments. Furthermore, they were each deeply concerned by issues of advancing individual Nez Perces' economic independence and rooting out problems like alcoholism, gambling, and "idleness," that were decaying the structural integrity of the community on Lapwai Reserve. Six years prior to that letter Halfmoon and Cashcash convened a conference with the superintendents of Lapwai's agency and schools detailing these very problems and proposing solutions. In his testimony, given May 2, 1912, Otis Halfmoon declared to the officials of Lapwai that there were many "young men [at Lapwai] who are following evil roads," and that "they don't work at all" and "simply hang around in the towns."² Going further, Halfmoon equated the problem of idleness to the problems of gambling and drinking, and when asked for proposed solutions, Halfmoon declared the need for "good

² "Report of Hearing Held at the Indian Office, May 2, 1912," Lapwai Idaho. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency. Box 3, Folder 41893-12. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

farmland” with improvements like irrigation and fencing to encourage young men to settle on their allotments and advance themselves through work and income.³

In regards to their attitudes on “work” and “progress” it is clear that Halfmoon, Cashcash, and other individuals like them were certain converts to American ideals. Their thoughts on the virtues of ownership and work are entirely inseparable from the Jeffersonian values that shaped federal policy and the federal officials governing the Indian agencies. Their equating of idleness and vice - to go along with their stance on marriage for that matter - departed not at all from the sermons and morals of the Catholic and Christian missionaries that individuals like Halfmoon and Cashcash considered to be their spiritual guides. Yet, at the same time, these individuals had not shed their identities as members of the Nez Perce Nation, quite to the contrary. Halfmoon was, at the same time, an advocate for the protection of tribal lands, an advocate for the protection of the Nez Perce language, and a strong lobbyist for the protection of the substance of the Nez Percés’ material and spoken culture: dances, festivals, and spoken spiritual and historical traditions.⁴

Halfmoon, and individuals like him, were people living simultaneously in two worlds, with their interests and thoughts deeply tied to both of them. They were living “middle grounds” between the histories, cultures, and societies of the United States and the indigenous American West. Their lives, their attitudes, and their historical agency

³ “Report of Hearing Held at the Indian Office, May 2, 1912,” Lapwai Idaho. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency. Box 3, Folder 41893-12. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁴ At the same time that Halfmoon approached the OIA as allies on matters of work and morality, he also proved to be a resistant thorn in the OIA’s side on issues of allotment, the tribal schools, and freedom for Nez Perce cultural practices. Halfmoon was an ardent and vocal defender of the Nez Perce’s treaty rights secured in 1855 and 1863. Letter: Theodore Sharpe to C.F. Hauke, April 18, 1912, Lapwai, Idaho. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency. Box 3, Folder 42566-1912. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

emerged as the product of a remarkable process, set in motion in the nineteenth century, that saw the separate worlds of Native Peoples, American settlers, and missionaries become woven together. And individuals such as Otis Halfmoon were an important part of this interlocking system, though he and other “Christianized” and “Americanized” native individuals by no means constituted the entirety of it.

As we return to the letter, received by Cato Sells on January 18, 1918, and examine it with a better understanding of the man, Otis Halfmoon, who produced it, we gain a fuller view of the context out of which it emerged. The early-twentieth century Indian agencies were indeed laboratories in a large-scale experiment to craft “idealized” citizens from the United States’ indigenous population. They sought to regulate behavior and promote acceptable forms of social organization and morality at the same time that they tried to stamp out “savage” attitudes, ideas, and institutions. They were not, however, simplistic, top-down institutions wherein government officials coerced and brainwashed. They were, instead, complex institutions, influenced by multiple sources of authority - civic, tribal, and religious - that at varying times overlapped or conflicted with one another. And they were, above all else, ethnically, racially, socially, and culturally heterogeneous institutions, shaped by neither Americans nor Native Peoples alone, but by the agency of both. The actions of Mr. Halfmoon demonstrate that an attempt to separate “American” motives and attitudes from that of “Indian” actions could at times be difficult if not impossible. The same can be said for religious and civic impulses, which at times clashed with one another, yet at others became indistinguishable. The three sentences that made their way from Lapwai to Washington, D.C., in 1918 were an artifact of a common

Christian and Catholic, American, and Native milieu, emerging on the Indian Reservations, at a crossroads of civilizations.

As we place the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations under a microscope, and investigate the emerging crossroads and middle grounds as they appeared in the early twentieth century, it forces us to new considerations and conclusions about life on these agencies under allotment. What we find is neither a straightforward assault on tribal lifeways and cultures, nor a complete Indian rejection of outside influences, but a nuanced negotiation of Christian and Catholic faith, American economic virtue, and Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce cultural institutions.

“Conversion” in Indian Country – of one form or another – stood as the overarching goal of both government agencies and missionary organizations. “Conversion,” however, turned into a broader process that effected Indians and non-Indians alike. In sum total, the process saw Americans, Indians, and religious societies adapting to one another, and “converting” to one another’s influences, simultaneously. Allotment of the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations formed a crossroads where the civilizations of Americans and Northwest Native Peoples ran together. The communities built at these crossroads reflected the dynamism and syncretism of their location, a place where multiple societies, histories, and cultures ran together.

Conversion

Questions of conversion come to form the very heart of this study. To what extent, and with what sort of commonality, did Native Peoples on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Lapwai Reservations become “converts” in the twentieth century? This question applies more broadly, too, than simply in a strict confessional sense, considering

also that acculturation, “civilization,” and Westernization-Americanization, were - fundamentally - “conversion” experiences in their own rights. This suggests, furthermore, a link in the American Indian experience between forms of theological and secular conversions. The two categories tended to react with and reinforce one another; individuals who tended to resist Christianization also tended to react more negatively as well to the prospects of taking up permanent residences on allotments, American and Western-moralized constructions of marriage and sexuality, and American conceptions “productive” and “civilized” economy.

For the Native Peoples living within the structure of reservation administrations and the missions, however, the influences of these institutions produced a vast array results, which denies any historian the ability to place people into discrete and tidy categories: “Civilized and uncivilized,” or “Christian and non-Christian.” Indeed, federal acculturation programs, and the efforts of Catholics and other Christian missionary organizations produced many unexpected results, which were the products of Native Peoples’ own agency, and their ability to adapt to outside influences, but also adapt the influences themselves to suit their own worlds and realities in a manner which made the most sense to them. So the question of conversion also fundamentally becomes a question of not only how Native Peoples adapted to the worlds of Catholics and Americans, but how they influenced these institutions to adapt to them.

Lastly, the question of conversion forces us into further consideration of the ongoing and evolving relationship between church and state on the twentieth-century Indian reservations. Despite the efforts of Thomas Jefferson Morgan in the 1890s to enforce a strict divide between secular and religious organizations, in reality the

operation of secular and spiritual institutions became as difficult to parse apart as the secular and spiritual goals of Indian “civilizing,” more generally. Significant points of disagreement and conflict between missionaries and public officials certainly existed, and their goals by no means perfectly aligned, but by the twentieth century, Catholics, the government, and Native Peoples had undoubtedly become welded together into a complex web of relationships that were all but impossible to pull apart.

Roads to the Middle Ground

At the turn of the twentieth century, following Montana’s passage into statehood, the Flathead Reservation overlapped with three counties: Lake, Missoula, and Sanders. In Sanders County, which formed the western rim of the reservation, stood the original Jocko Agency site - which was moved to Dixon in 1910, still in Sanders County, at the mouth of the Jocko River - along with an Indian settlement site at Camas Prairie. Lake County contained most of the reservation, and held the fertile Flathead Valley floor. Early in the twentieth century it became the most populated part of the reservation, with major settlements running the length of the valley to the southern tip of Flathead Lake. Running from south to north stood the Arlee homestead, then St. Ignatius and the Ronan Springs town site, and the Pablo homestead. At the head of the valley, and on the southern shore of the lake stood Polson, a town which grew quickly after the Flathead Reservation was opened to white settlement in 1906, and quickly became the county seat. In 1910, the Jesuit’s from St. Ignatius helped build a second Catholic Parish on the reservation at Polson. The portion of the Flathead Reservation that extended into

Missoula County, the small Southeastern corner, was relatively desolate, save for a small settlement site at Evaro.⁵

At the turn of the twentieth century the Nez Perce Reservation also straddled three counties: Idaho, Lewis, and Nez Perce. Most of the settlement remained situated near the Clearwater River, which ran along the eastern and northern frontiers of the reservation. Lapwai, which remained the agency site, was positioned on the northeastern corner of the reservation in Nez Perce County. The other major settlement, Kamiah, stood on the southeastern corner of the reservation in Idaho County. The Jesuit Mission, St. Joseph's, and the Slickpoo homestead site stood nearly due east of Lapwai, in Lewis County. Unlike the Flathead Reservation, no significant, predominantly white, townships - like Polson - emerged on the Lapwai reservation, despite its being designated for allotment in 1895 and officially opened to white settlement in 1902. The opening of the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, however, did indeed bring a healthy number of white Idahoans onto the agency, and for the most part these newcomers filtered into the existing settlement sites.⁶

Meanwhile, the Blackfeet Reservation lay mostly situated in Glacier County, Montana, through the southern arm of the reserve extended into Pondera and Teton counties. The main settlement site, Browning, was situated in the heart of the reserve, only miles away from Holy Family Mission on Two Medicine Creek, and became the seat of the agency administration. The primary white settlement sat just off of the eastern boundary of the reservation at Cut Bank, which became the seat of Glacier County.

⁵ A survey of the Flathead Reservation was published in 1905 by its former Superintendent, William Henry Smead, who was Agent from 1897 to 1904. See, William Henry Smead, *Land of the Flatheads: Montana* (St. Paul, MN: Pioneer Press, 1905).

⁶ "Land-Allotments, 108428," February 18, 1918, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 30, Folder 108428, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington. D.C.

Several other small, predominantly Piegan, homestead sites also dotted the reservation, including Babb - a Métis community established in 1905, Heart Butte, Kiowa, Blackfoot, and Seville. The Blackfeet Reservation was designated for allotment in 1905, and finally opened to non-Indian settlement in 1911. Nonetheless, the populations of Browning and the outlying settlements remained predominantly Indian. When congress designated the former western section of the reserve, ceded in 1896, as Glacier National Park, however, it precipitated the creation of two further towns on the western edge of the reservation. The first was East Glacier Village, a stop on the Great Northern Railroad which became the primary entrance to the park. A second park entrance from the Blackfeet reservation was also built further north at St. Mary, which formed the eastern terminus of the Going to the Sun Road.⁷

At the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century, modern infrastructure began to arrive to the reservations. The completion of the Northern Pacific in 1883 brought the railroad along the frontier of the Blackfeet and Nez Perce Reservations. The road also passed through the southern arm of the Flathead Reservation, thanks to a right-of-way granted in 1882 despite protest from Eneas, Charlot, Alexander, and other prominent headmen from the Confederated Salish and Kootenais. Along with the rail line came the cattle industry. By 1898, there were 15,000 head of cattle being run on the Lapwai Reservation, 10,000 on the Blackfeet reserve, and 11,000 head on the Flathead Reservation. The lion's share of the 36,000 cattle present on the three reservations fell under the ownership of mixed-race individuals who seized-hold of the

⁷ On the formation of Glacier National Park, see, Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also, "Family Histories, 1908," Records Group 75, Blackfeet Agency, Entry 24, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. OIA file: "Browning Townsite," Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Blackfeet Agency, Box 31, Folder 128 - Browning Townsite, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

opportunities that the railroad provided, such as Michel Pablo - of mixed white and Piegan descent - and Joseph Morrigneau - of mixed Flathead and white descent - who would quickly rise to economic prominence in their tribes and on their reservations.⁸

At the time, the reserves experienced an expansion of public infrastructure to accommodate the nascent towns and communities on the reservations. The agencies at Lapwai, Browning, and Dixon, built plants meant to manufacture and repair farming equipment, they also built grain elevators and warehouses to store the swelling numbers of crops being grown on the three reservations. With the opening of the reservations to white settlement in the early twentieth century, the office of Indian affairs closed or downsized the Indian Service schools that had been opened in the nineteenth century, and instead began to funnel an increasing number of Indian students to the public school infrastructure that was set up to accommodate non-Indian settlement on the reservations. Following Nez Perce reservation's opening in 1902, public schools emerged in Kamiah and Lapwai, Flathead's opening in 1911 brought public schools to Polson and Ronan Springs, and Blackfoot reservation's opening in 1911-12 brought public schools to Browning. To encourage the shift to an increasingly standardized school system, the Indian Service offered a system of tuition vouchers from the Education Division's budget to pay for the schooling of Indian students in state-funded schools, similar to the extant voucher system that helped to support the Catholic schools.⁹

At the same time, the agencies expanded public and service roads, to encourage economic development, but to also support the transportation of people and material

⁸ "Statistics of Indian Lands, Crops, Stock, and Labor," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1898* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1898), 617-621.

⁹ Memorandum, Fred C. Morgan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 4, 1912, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 437, Folder 39847-3, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

around the reservations. Funding for such projects came from a mixture of state, county, and federal sources, supplemented by a growing stream of internal revenue gleaned from the reservation itself, by taxes and fees exacted by the agencies for grazing permits, cattle ownership, and access to resources. The fact that such infrastructure not only connected the small communities on the reservations, but also opened the agencies and networked them to surrounding communities like Missoula, Kalispell, Cut Bank, and Lewiston, furthermore, gave the Indian Service the ability - still requiring no small amount of political pressure and cajoling - to dip into county and state infrastructure budgets as well. These streams of funding also came to be poured into agricultural projects, such as the Jocko River Irrigation Project, funded by the federal Bureau of Reclamation, and commenced in 1912. In sum total, the vision and purpose of these projects intended to bring the Indian agencies in Montana and Idaho “up to speed” with the public and economic development taking place more broadly through the two states.¹⁰

Such development certainly had its limits, however. Public health, for example, remained a problematic concern. Even into the twentieth century, the OIA could offer little more than small clinics operated out of the agencies which were chronically understaffed and underfunded. Lapwai Reservation boasted a sanatorium meant primarily for the care of tubercular patients, and it received referrals of patients from throughout the Northwest region. Due to the constraints of funding, however, it could never operate as much more than a quarantine hospital, meant to guard against the wider spread of tuberculosis among the general reservation population. Mortality rates at the sanatorium

¹⁰ R.T. Plunkett, *Geological Survey Circular 182: Evaluation of Streamflow Records in Flathead River Basin, Montana* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1952).

were staggeringly high, and, in general, the hospital offered little more than comfort for its patients that overwhelmingly succumbed to their afflictions.¹¹

As a result of the limits of government funds and services the Catholic missions in the twentieth century took on a role on the reservations that was hardly dissimilar from the social roles played by Catholic parishes throughout the wider country: offering an alternative to public infrastructure - particularly in the realm of education - and supplementing public infrastructure, carving out a service niche in arenas where public funds were lacking or non-existent, particularly in areas of healthcare and poverty assistance. The mission schools came to offer a Catholic alternative to the public system, not only for Native Peoples, but also for the non-Indian population that was established in the twentieth century. The Ursulines, the Sisters of Charity, and the Sisters of Providence, present on the Blackfeet, Lapwai, and Flathead Reservations, also opened clinics for emergency and first-aid medical care, and helped to reduce the strain on the public system.¹² The missions also worked to provide money for other, non-emergency forms of care, which were otherwise all-but-non-existent at the agencies and on the reservations. Catholics, furthermore, worked to supplement the limited rations available for the hungry and impoverished. In sum total, the missions on the reservations came to provide a

¹¹ Inspection reports, conducted periodically by the Office of Indian Affairs, revealed the grimness of reality at the sanatorium, and the more general grimness of health conditions on the Indian Reservations. Report: "Inspection of Fort Lapwai Sanatorium," September 2, 1926, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 203, Folder, 43314-26, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, Report: "Inspection of Fort Lapwai Sanatorium," April 26, 1927, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 203, Folder, 22109-27, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

¹² Much like the Catholic school network, Catholic hospitals, nationwide, emerged as an alternative to public infrastructure, wherein Catholics felt greater security in protecting the basis of their religious tenets. As shown by historians Barbara Mann Wall and Anne Butler, Catholic Sisters played crucial roles in patient care in a gendered institution where much of the labor performed by Catholic women happened in the context of an administration dominated by men. See, Barbara Mann Wall, *American Catholic Hospitals: A Century of Changing Markets and Missions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011). Also, Anne M. Butler, *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

limited social safety net on the emerging modern Indian reservations in an era before federal and state governments could provide a coherent and robust public welfare system.¹³

Development, construction, and modernization in the reservation and rural infrastructures occurred within the context of one of the most ambitious acculturation programs ever undertaken by the United States, the General Allotment Act. Its intended purpose was to convert the Indian agencies from arenas of oversight and regulation - of a population that the government deemed to be wards - to self-sustaining and integratable agrarian communities. The ultimate vision of allotment held within it the intention to erase the reservations as geopolitical units, and to ultimately disband the confederated tribes they contained as legal entities. Once carried through to fruition, it was believed that General Allotment would detribalize Indian peoples and bring them more fully into communion with the mainstream American nation.

The most basic element of this program centered on the allotment of lands in severalty from the remaining treaty lands held within the confines of the reserves. The general act, designed primarily by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs - headed by Henry Laurens Dawes - and by private and public reformers from the Lake Mohonk Conferences, did not actually implement allotment for any of the agencies. Rather, it gave the President and Congress authority to designate agencies for eligibility and execution on a one by one basis. From the outset, allotment in severalty was considered to be an incremental policy that would take an immense commitment of time and resources - at

¹³ Hospital and clinic projects operated by Catholics, such as the small hospitals set up by the Sisters of Providence, Ursulines, and other sisters out of St. Ignatius Mission, often focused on “filling gaps” in federal services and budgets. OIA File: “Holy Family Hospital,” August 29, 1929 - July 6, 1930, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Flathead Agency, Box 116, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

least on a scale of the limited resources the OIA was used to operating with - before it could be brought to completion. The allotment process followed a form that had already been implemented in a less coherent fashion since the end of the Civil War, by providing tribal enrollees with parcels of private land. Once designated, agencies would go about amending and updating tribal rolls, to determine all eligible recipients. At the same time, the Indian Service would undertake the task of surveying reservations into sections, and in classifying tribal lands according to their values as farming, grazing, or logging zones. Once completed, enrollees were each given a limited set of time to claim their individual allotments, before reservations were then generally opened for settlement and land sales. Typically heads of households could claim up to 160 acres of farming land or 320 acres of grazing lands; meanwhile, individuals of the age of majority, who were not otherwise claimed under a household, were eligible for 80 acres of farmland or 160 acres of grazing land. Finally, orphans and other individuals under the age of majority could be eligible for the receipt of 40 acres.

“Surplus” farming and grazing acreage was then intended to be tossed into the public domain, eligible for purchase by both Indians and non-Indians from the General Land Office. Alternatively designated lands, such as logging and foresting lands, would continue to be managed by the Indian Service, on the tribe’s behalf, until tribes were deemed capable of managing their own affairs. In total, survey and allotment was a long and convoluted process, and one which generated no small amount of resistance from local Indian leaders, who often equated allotment and sale, with the theft of their lands and resources. Nez Perce Reservation was the earliest of the agencies in the Idaho Panhandle and Western Montana to be designated, in 1895, it was finally opened seven

years later. Likewise, eight years passed between Flathead Reservation's appointment for survey in 1903 and its opening in 1911, and five years passed between Blackfeet Reservation's designation in 1906 and its initial opening in 1911.

Of course, apportioning private property to every Indian enrollee did not encompass the complete vision of the program, which was bolstered with a great number of subsidiary acculturation programs and associations meant both to encourage a cultural shift on reservations toward intensive agriculture and to assist with the transition. At the head of these was an education program, first administered exclusively by the Indian Service out of its day and boarding schools. Along with the schools' more infamous purposes - which involved the proliferation of written and spoken English to supplant tribal languages, and the strict enforcement of policies meant to make Indians grow accustomed to a distinctly "American appearance" when it came to grooming and attire - the schools also operated as centers of technical training, the purpose of which was to give Indian students necessary skills for the changing world in which they lived. After the full implementation of allotment, however, the initial Indian Service schools largely gave away to public schools run by state and county districts. The large boarding schools like Carlisle, of course, persisted, but for most Indian children, including the ones living on Flathead, Lapwai, and Blackfeet Reservations, they found themselves thrown in with non-Indian students in small, local school districts. The integration of schools, appears to have had a profound influence, bringing Indians and Americans of schooling age into a level of intimate contact with one another that was never experienced to the same extent by previous generations.

Other education programs meant to compliment the allotment policy included farmers and agrarian associations, organized among the adult enrollees of allotted reservations. The associations were designed to train individuals past schooling age in critical skills necessary for the economic reforms being implemented, as chapters taught individual Indians how to use modern equipment and techniques for irrigation, crop storage, field rotation, and livestock management. The farmers' associations, furthermore, were designed to pool limited resources and coordinate labor for harvests, for the gathering of cattle, and for the storage of crops. The full scope of all of these programs was meant to encourage and entice Indians to take up permanent residence on their allotted homesteads, and to work their land.¹⁴

Agriculture

On the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations, the shift to agriculture came to be most swiftly embraced by the two reservation's substantial Métis populations. They grasped the opportunities that - particularly the cattle industry - could potentially provide. Even before the allotment of their reservations, certain "mixed-bloods" started to use the advantages that their tribal affiliations provided - access to ample and free grazing lands being the most important - to accrue considerable personal gains. Without a doubt, these individuals' mixed heritages gave them a propensity to embrace westernization and acculturation, regardless of how deeply they also embraced their native heritages. As argued, quite convincingly, by historian William Unrau, many Métis individuals tended

¹⁴ The literature on Allotment, its design, its purposes, and its successes and failures is quite vast. For overviews on Allotment as a policy see, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Also, Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Also, William Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1989).

to be quick to grasp the advantages that came with acculturation, and also tended to see adaptation, particularly to agriculture, as the vital and intractable course their communities needed to take. As a result, Métis, wherever they resided, tended to become disproportionately over-represented among their communities' civic and economic leaders.¹⁵

Among the most important of these figures on the Flathead Reservation was Michel Pablo, the son of a Hispanic father and Piegan mother, who grew up on Washington's Colville Reservation in the 1850s, before moving to Montana and being adopted as a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenais in 1864. In 1884, he and a fellow mixed-blood Flathead, Charles Allard, purchased a small herd of 13 bison, for \$2000, and moved it onto the reservation. By the time Allard died in 1896, the herd numbered 300, which was split between Pablo and Allard's widow. With allotment on the horizon, and ample open range on the reservation under threat in 1906, Pablo sold his herd to the Canadian government, and reinvested the profits into his simultaneously growing cattle enterprise, centered on lands claimed and purchased on the Flathead Reservation. Pablo's bison herd had grown so precipitously that it took five years for Pablo and cowboys he hired out from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai nation to round it up, for shipment via train. Pablo's investments in herding quickly made him a moderate fortune, and the leading economic and civic figure on the reservation. By 1907, Pablo owned 10,000 head of cattle, which accounted for about 85% of all of the cattle and nearly half of the stock being run on the Flathead Reservation. He forged close relationships with Chiefs Koostata - who had risen as the successor to Eneas among the

¹⁵ William Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1989).

Kootenais - Charlot, and Michel - Alexander's successor among the Kalispels - and became an influential, if unelected, *de facto* member of the Confederated Flathead Nation's tribal leadership.¹⁶

Likewise, on the Blackfeet Reservation, mixed-blooded individuals led the charge in embracing agriculture. Among the most significant figures in the Blackfeet Nation on this count was James A. Perrine, the son of a white trader and cattleman and a Piegan mother. After the allotment of the Blackfeet Reservation passed in 1906, Perrine quickly rose in the ranks of the Piegan leadership, as a cautioned proponent of allotment, so long as the policy was dutifully administered in the best interest of Blackfeet enrollees, and in a fashion that would support the agricultural development of the tribe and not simply transfer lands into the hands of whites. By the beginning of the 1910s, Perrine had become the Secretary of the Blackfeet's Tribal Council, where he entered into a "somewhat truculent" relationship with the agency's superintendent, Arthur McFartridge. Perrine's object obsession emerged as the Two Medicine Creek Irrigation Project, funded through the OIA and the Bureau of Reclamation, which he hoped would create over 30 sections of irrigable land for Blackfeet allotments. Indeed, by 1913, 20,000 acres of allotted land, irrigable under the Two Medicine project, existed. Seeking to put the land to plow, and to get as many Blackfeet allotments operational as possible, the tribal

¹⁶ Much of Pablo's past is cloudy, due to insufficient documentation, important biographical information comes from a U.S. District Court Case from 1904-1905, in which he acted as the plaintiff, arguing that taxes exacted on him by Missoula County were illegal because of his status as an enrollee of the Flathead Nation. The defense, the County of Missoula, Montana, argued that he was not an Indian and a ward, but - in fact - a citizen of the United States, and resident of Montana and Missoula County. See, "*United States v. Heyfron*," in *Digest of Decisions of United States Courts*, Vol. 9 (Westlaw Publishing Company, 1914), 964-966. See also, Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 173-186.

council arranged a deal by which allottees could purchase farming implements from the agency and then be reimbursed out of the tribal fund.¹⁷

McFartridge, however, failed to acquire equipment in time for the 1913 planting season, much to the ire of Perrine. By going over McFartridge's head, and directly to the Commissioner's office, Perrine finally acquired plows and other equipment, albeit late. He also made further demands, to ensure that the tribal council held greater control in the allotment process, including the removal and replacement of an agency superintendent at the business council's recommendation. The demands were dismissed, but nonetheless placed a great deal of pressure on the Indian Service to be more responsive to Blackfeet leaders like Perrine, who demonstrated both an impressive ability to navigate the Indian Service bureaucracy and to command the influence of the tribal enrollees. Perrine certainly wielded influence with the most of the remainder of the reservation's Métis population, who like their counterparts on the Flathead Reservation, quickly seized on the opportunities that agriculture, and particularly cattle-raising offered. And quite quickly, just like on the Flathead reservation, a small handful of Métis ranchers owned a vast majority of the stock being run on Blackfeet lands. Perrine, however, also quickly gained influence with "full-bloods" and the poor too, frequently convincing the Indian Service to purchase stock that would then be allotted to poorer Blackfeet enrollees. By the middle of the 1910s, Perrine had become the virtual "father" of Blackfeet farming and ranching. Within five years, much of the 20,000 acres of the Two Medicine Project had been put into production, and thanks to the dogged watchfulness of Perrine almost all of that land had remained in the hands of Blackfeet allottees. Furthermore, within a decade, the total

¹⁷ Memorandum: Arthur McFartridge to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 5, 1913, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Blackfeet Agency, Box 17, Folder 18420-1913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

amount of stock being run on the Blackfeet reservation had tripled from nearly 10,000 to over 30,000 head, more than half of which was in Blackfeet hands, and nearly a quarter of which were in the hands of small-time, rank-and-file Blackfeet allottees.¹⁸

At the same time, particularly for emerging mixed ancestry tribal leaders in the Northwest, the connections between secular and spiritual conversion cannot be ignored. Tribal leaders who embraced Westernization and agriculture as a way forward for themselves and their communities also tended to embrace components of Christian identity. Returning to the case of Michel Pablo, his parents had been Catholic converts in Washington. Upon his relocation to the Flathead Reservation he settled in Arlee, which held a substantial population of Catholic converts, and also became an active member of St. Ignatius. On October 1, 1864, Pablo was married by Fr. Jacques Favre, S.J., to Agate (Agatha) Finley, a Kalispel woman whose parents – Augustin (Yoostah) and Clemence (Cah-le-moss) Finley – were Catholic converts and members of Alexander’s band. Pablo remained active in St. Ignatius for the remainder of his life, all of his children were baptized into the Church, and he made substantial contributions to the construction of the second, larger, brick church erected in 1890.¹⁹

Less overall is known about Perrine’s personal life, he had certainly grown up with exposure to Christianity. His mother, Monic Simon, was of mixed Piegan and French-Canadian descent, and was also Catholic. She was likely a member of the early congregations of either Fr. Philip Rappaglossi or Fr. Peter Prando. Perrine’s father is not

¹⁸ Memorandum: F.H. Abbott to Arthur McFartridge, July 25, 1913, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Blackfeet Agency, Box 17, Folder 18420-1913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter, F.H. Abbott to James Perrine, June 25, 1913, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Blackfeet Agency, Box 17, Folder 18420-1913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹ Chalk Courchane, “Michel Pablo, A Composite History,” *Oregon-California Trails Association*, <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/bios/MichelPablo.pdf>.

listed in the Blackfeet Genealogy, little otherwise is known of him, other than that he was a white man and one of the earlier whites with economic access to the Blackfeet Reserve. He married Monic Simon sometime between 1860 and 1872, with the couple giving birth to James in 1872. James married Mary Perrine (maiden name unknown), who was a Métis woman of one quarter Cree descent, and three-quarters French-Canadian descent. The two wed in a ceremony at the Holy Family Church, at the Two Medicine Creek Catholic Mission, and in 1900 Mary gave birth to the couple's only daughter, Irene Perrine, who was baptized at Holy Family.²⁰

Of course, the depths of Pablo's and Perrine's religious commitments remain all but impossible to account for fully. If anything, individuals such as Pablo and Perrine perfectly demonstrated the complexity of emerging reservation identities. However sincere their commitment to Catholicism, that component of their identities no less complimented and bolstered their private and public ambitions. Christian identity greatly affected tribal enrollees' relationship to the Indian Service and to the United States government. Indian Service agents tended to count open Christians as being among the "progressive" contingent of reservations, giving them a level of influence and credence among government employees that was almost never bestowed upon more staunch Indian traditionalists, who were almost always disregarded out of hand as "backward" and "shiftless." More broadly, and importantly, being Catholic or Christian was an absolute prerequisite for a reservation enrollee to be deemed "civilized" by Americans from surrounding communities, who were vital to the economic aspirations of Pablo, Perrine, and similarly situated individuals. This recognition, furthermore, came with its

²⁰ "Perrine Family Genealogy," *Blackfeet Family History*, accessed December 17, 2014, <http://www.blackfeetgenealogy.com/pafg110.htm#2431>.

advantages, as almost universally, Americans regarded “civilized” Indians as the conduits of exchange between their communities and reservation communities. The growth of agriculture on the allotment era reservations, and the emergence of Métis and modern tribal leaders demonstrated that Christianity and Catholicism was more than an identity, it was a currency of influence, politics, and economics.²¹

While mixed-race and acculturated leaders often played key roles in the early phases of allotment, the government’s attempts at organizing rank-and-file allottees met with somewhat more modest gains, as demonstrated by the “farmers’ associations” organized on the Nez Perce Reservation in the 1920s. Unlike the reservations in Western Montana, the Nez Perce Reservation lacked a similar contingent of “progressive” Métis leaders. Agricultural development around the agency in the decades following the reservation’s allotment in 1902 followed an uneven pattern dividing almost perfectly along sectarian lines. In particular, the old Presbyterian “mission” bands, located around Kamiah and Lapwai led the way in embracing agricultural development, due to their early exposure to allotment by Lapwai’s Presbyterian missionaries and agents in the 1870s. Meanwhile most of the allottees that had come from the non-treaty bands allowed to relocate on the reserve, and even from among Slickpoo’s Catholic Band had done little to settle and improve their allotted lands.

In the first decades after allotment, Lapwai Agency made several attempts to promote agricultural development. The first and most successful was the establishment of a Training and Industrial School at Lapwai, which, in 1907, was expanded by

²¹ With striking clarity, the architects of allotment and the United States’ Indian civilization programs viewed the greatest obstacles to “Indian progress” as the histories of tribalism, nomadism, and paganism, thus the pillars of their efforts came to be cultural homogenization with American culture, agriculturalism and sedentary living, and Christianization. See, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings of the “Friends of the Indian,” 1880-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

Superintendent Oscar H. Lipps to include a training program for young men, beyond schooling age. Under Lipps' program, Lapwai agency paid for the enrollment and boarding of men in a set of winter courses, releasing them in the spring to attend to their allotments. Though enrollment in the program remained relatively sparse, those who participated eventually became the core Indian leadership of further agricultural development drives in the 1920s. A much less successful effort came in 1916; with the aid of "experts" from the State Agricultural College of Idaho (later, Boise State University). The agency attempted to establish girls' canning clubs, a program which quickly collapsed due to a sheer lack of interest on the part Nez Perces. Attempting to assess the program's failure, Lapwai agency found that canned preserves had little to no place in Nez Perce diet. And based upon the evidence, it appeared that even the most acculturated Nez Perces' were not at all interested in developing a taste for canned fruit.²²

In 1923, Lapwai Agency again mounted a concerted effort to spark agricultural development, organizing a farmers' cooperative, intended to pool resources for development and to offer agricultural training. The program was initially met with great enthusiasm by elder leaders across the board, including the mission bands, but also by prominent Catholic leaders like Otis Halfmoon, who had already, a decade earlier, been demanding greater effort from the agency in enticing young men away from the gambling

²² Letter: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Nov. 29, 1907, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 207, Folder, 95079-07, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Oscar H. Lipps, December 6, 1907, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 207, Folder, 95079-07, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. OIA Circular: C.C. Upchurch (Superintendent of Lapwai Agency) to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 21, 1929, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder, 95500-22, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Otis B. Goodall, "Report of the Fort Lapwai School, Sanatorium, and Agency," October 13, 1916, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 207, Folder 112632-1916, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

halls and speakeasies, and to getting them to work on their allotted lands. The agency, and the tribal business council organized fifteen chapters, and also laid plans to establish “Boys and Girls Clubs” intended to work in concert with both the public schools and the mission schools to supplement young Nez Perces’ education with practical skills in crop cultivation and animal husbandry. Within a year, however, many of the younger men on the reservation began to resist the farmer’s associations. They dropped out of the chapters and meetings, a problem which Lapwai agency blamed on their desire to simply lease their allotments and have “someone else do all the work.”²³

On the insistence of elder leaders and both Presbyterian and Catholic missionaries, however, two chapters remained open in 1924, and persisted. Furthermore, by 1929, Lapwai agency and the tribal business council had constructed sites for eight “Boys and Girls” Agricultural Clubs, with two more under construction that were completed a year later. While the progress of the clubs could hardly be deemed a failure, their successes also consistently fell short of the hopes and aspirations of the agents of Fort Lapwai. The limited successes of agricultural training programs on the Nez Perce Reservation can probably be best attributed to a successful effort on the part of the majority of the confederated Nez Perce nation to resist allotment. When the reservation was opened in 1902, it appears that many, if not most, Nez Perces, selected their private allotments without consideration for their agricultural potential. Instead, many both consciously and unconsciously grouped together their allotments to preserve the integrity of culturally significant tribal lands. As result, a continued communal way of life based

²³ OIA Circular: C.C. Upchurch (Superintendent of Lapwai Agency) to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 21, 1929, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder, 95500-22, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

on herding and gathering in their conjoined allotments persisted on the Nez Perce Reservation well into the twentieth century.²⁴

More generally, agricultural programs across Idaho and Montana produced many unintended, and sometimes undesirable results. Indian agency under the allotment era was a force for which the Indian Service could never properly anticipate or account. Another reason for the limited gains made by Lapwai's agricultural extension programs was that while few Nez Perces expressed much interest in working as agriculturalists, many Nez Perces quickly adapted to capitalism, deriving income from their allotments by leasing out their lands for use by non-Indian Idaho farmers and ranchers. Already, in 1907, only five years after the opening of the Nez Perce Reservation, 354 allottees applied to the Indian Service for approval of leases on either parts or the entirety of their allotted lands.²⁵

Nez Perce capitalism received a mixed set of opinions from the federal agents and missionaries managing the reserve. Oscar Lipps, overseeing the initial phases of the reservation's allotment as Superintendent, despised the burgeoning practice of leasing allotted lands, since it directly undercut his efforts to promote native agriculture, and, more damningly, assaulted the purpose and the spirit behind the general allotment act, which was tied-up in Jeffersonian ideals connecting the virtues of diligence and citizenship to the ownership and stewardship of privately held land. Likewise, Katherine McBeth - often referred to as "Miss Kate," a Presbyterian missionary who arrived to

²⁴ Emily Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Perces, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

²⁵ Memorandum: Oscar H. Lipps to The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 13, 1907, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. "List of Nez Perce Allottees Seeking Permission to Lease," November 4, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Kamiah in 1879, and the superintendent of Presbyterian missions by the time of allotment, decried the proliferation of leasing among the mission bands. She claimed that the Presbyterian Nez Perces were “not doing as much farming now as they did several years ago before they were permitted to lease so much of their land.”²⁶ Fr. Joseph Cataldo, still the superintendent of St. Joseph’s in the early phases of allotment, largely echoed McBeth’s sentiments, believing that leasing had without a doubt prevented “any progress along agricultural lines.”²⁷ Cataldo’s briefings to Lipps, more generally, revealed a dissatisfaction with the course of allotment - a Catholic sentiment found more generally on all three agencies, which will be covered in greater depth in the following chapter on conflict - as he pointed out that the Coeur d’Alenes of Idaho, in the spiritual charge of the De Smet Jesuit Mission, who had not yet been allotted, were making considerably greater strides toward agricultural growth, where they were being directed to develop their still-communally-held tribal property.²⁸

In response, Lipps intended to limit further permissions only to “the aged and infirm, the minors and incompetents, and for heirship lands where there is more than one heir.”²⁹ Defending his decisions, Lipps claimed that Nez Perce dependence on rentals had returned the agency to the old “ration and annuity system.” He was, however, denied the ability to take such a harsh stance due to it violating the rights granted “competent”

²⁶ Oscar H. Lipps, “Relative to Indians who are capable of leasing their allotments free from Departmental supervision,” August 13, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁷ Oscar H. Lipps, “Relative to Indians who are capable of leasing their allotments free from Departmental supervision,” August 13, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁸ Oscar H. Lipps, “Relative to Indians who are capable of leasing their allotments free from Departmental supervision,” August 13, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁹ Oscar H. Lipps, “Relative to Indians who are capable of leasing their allotments free from Departmental supervision,” August 13, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

allottees under the Dawes Act, and the additional amendments made to the policy by the Curtis Act of 1898 and the Burke Act of 1906, which both expanded the power of “competent” Indians to manage their own property and affairs.³⁰ In desperation, Lipps turned over the lists of applicants to both McBeth and Cataldo in the fall of 1907, hoping to gain their support in his desire to suspend the practice. And while both missionaries disapproved of leasing, and Cataldo most strongly, neither was inclined either to go along with the superintendent of Lapwai. McBeth acknowledged the rights of competent allottees from the mission bands, despite her personal feelings on the matter. Cataldo requested to be “excused from expressing an opinion on the subject,” as a result of his “position [as] spiritual advisor to [the Catholic] Indians.”³¹ As a result, leasing continued on.³²

As time passed, both missionaries and government officials came to accept the Nez Perce approach to the allotment of their reservation. For as much Cataldo lamented over the effects of leasing, he and St. Joseph’s almost immediately began to use the practice for the benefit of the mission and Catholic Nez Perces. In 1907, the mission leased part of Samuel Slickpoo’s allotment, running between St. Joseph’s and Mission Creek, in order to run a water intake from the creek to the mission school. The mission,

³⁰ Letter: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 29, 1907, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³¹ Letter: Fr. Joseph Cataldo, S.J. to Oscar Lipps, October 2, 1907, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³² Letter: C.F. Larrabee (Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs) to Fr. Joseph Cataldo, September 9, 1907, Washington, D.C. Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: C.F. Larrabee to Katherine McBeth, October 9, 1907, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: Katherine McBeth to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 25, 1907, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 5, Folder, 70400-1907, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

furthermore, leased out other Catholic allotments to graze the mission herd of cattle, which expanded to a size of nearly one hundred head, a move that simultaneously increased the mission's own self-sufficiency, while also providing an income for Nez Perce landlords. By the 1920s, even the government had to admit that the Nez Percés made for exceedingly "good landlords;" as a result of the industrial and agricultural training provided the schools, mission, and the farmers' associations, they demonstrated the Nez Percés were, by and large, "fully acquainted with the processes of farming."³³

Perhaps the most unexpected and unintended consequence of allotment and agrarian training on the Flathead Reservation was the rapid growth of cannabis farming in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At least as far as OIA investigators could trace, marijuana had first been introduced to the Flathead Reservation in the mid-1920s by migrant farm laborers who often passed through Polson and Dayton, and who spent large portions of Montana's growing season living in the communities surrounding the reserve, like Missoula and Kalispell. With relative speed and ease, however, a handful of Flathead allottees mastered cultivating the crop for themselves. By the 1930s the practice had become quite widespread - enough so, that the agency, the Indian police, and the local sheriff's' jurisdictions could never track down the ultimate source. The popularity of marijuana use and cultivation no doubt spread as an alternative to the persisting prohibition against selling liquor on reservations or to Indians, laws which were only more firmly entrenched by Prohibition. The growing marijuana culture on the Flathead

³³ Quote: Letter: C.C. Upchurch to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 21, 1929, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder, 95500-22, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also Letter, Fr. Joseph Cataldo, S.J., to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Slickpoo, Idaho, September 4, 1907, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 56, Folder 4, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Report: Fr. Thomas M. Neate, S.J., to Fr. William Ketcham, S.J., December 31, 1912, Slickpoo Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 80, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Reservation also meshed well with traditional Salish tobacco cultures that were still found prevalently throughout the reservation.³⁴

The Office of Indian affairs came to view “pernicious” habit as a serious problem, and beginning in 1932, Flathead Agency expended a great amount of energy determining how widespread the drug’s use was, how it was being used, and for what purpose. The agency assigned special investigator J.C. Curtis to this task, and he filed a report with Commissioner of Indian Affairs, C.J. Rhoads in October. Curtis reported that usage extended across the entirety of the reservation. Although he found instances of use by both men and women alike, Curtis noted that the behavior was particularly prevalent among males, who either mixed marijuana in with the tobacco of their cigarettes, or “pour[ed] boiling water over the leaves of the plant in a small kettle... [to] then inhale the fumes of the resulting decoction through an inverted paper funnel.”³⁵ As for his report on the effects of the drug, which were ascertained by “questioning several [Flatheads] who have used marihuana,” Curtis claimed it induced “hallucinations,” “double consciousness,” and “great prolongation of time.”³⁶ Curtis further expressed concern about the possibility that the drugs’ use could initiate states of “delirium,” causing users

³⁴ Extract Taken from Report Dated August 22, 1933, From L.C. Mueller, Chief Special Officer, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. Letter: Louis C. Mueller to John Collier, October 16, 1933, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁵ Memorandum: J.C. Curtis to C.J. Rhoads, October 10, 1932, Ronan, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

³⁶ Memorandum: J.C. Curtis to C.J. Rhoads, October 10, 1932, Ronan, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

to “become violent and excited and want[ing] to fight,” or that it could induce “sexual excitement, hilariousness” and a state of “exaltation.”³⁷

Unsurprisingly, the Office of Indian Affairs quickly determined that the presence of marijuana cultivation and usage on the Flathead Reservation needed to be stamped out as expediently as possible. And Flathead Agency targeted migrant laborers as the source of the problem, but also because, unlike the Flatheads, they could be brought under the jurisdictions of the state and counties. Indian Service agents, however, found it to be difficult to make much headway, not in the least because the state of Montana had yet, in 1932, to pass any sort of statute explicitly banning the plant’s growth, though laws regulating its harvest and use were in place. In September, 1932, Curtis apprehended three migrant laborers, Joseph Bargas, Manuel Torres, and Tridad Garcia, whom he found in possession of marijuana in their rooming house in Polson. The same day, Curtis discovered plants growing in a field being worked by several Hispanic and Flathead laborers, and arrested their foreman, Anselmo Ontivaros, having all of them locked in the County Jail at Polson. Curtis contacted Polson’s County Attorney, James Burke, but Burke advised their immediate release, informing Curtis that neither state nor county laws were strong enough to secure a conviction, and that the matter otherwise did not affect Lake County enough to pursue the case.³⁸

Lack of even firm federal statutes against marijuana, made its use and cultivation on Flathead Reservation all but impossible to stamp out. By 1935, Flathead Agency and the Indian Service had attempted to change tacts, seeking to instead control marijuana by

³⁷ Memorandum: J.C. Curtis to C.J. Rhoads, October 10, 1932, Ronan, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

³⁸ Letter: J.C. Curtis to C.J. Rhoads, September 17, 1932, Polson, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

expanding the extant prohibitions against selling intoxicants to allottees. By this time, however, the cottage industry of cannabis farming on Flathead Reservation was well enough established that the OIA had given up any hope of actually rooting out the practice, and instead shifted its focus to an attempt to control and contain its spread.³⁹

Making a “Polite” Society

Throughout the Allotment Era, the OIA continued to grasp at straws for a sufficient means to enforce its civilization programs and discourage “unsatisfactory” behavior. The problem was two-fold. First, on a reservation-by-reservation basis the effectiveness of OIA policies depended greatly on the skill of local administrators and their ability to effectively wield influence with the reservation’s prominent figures, as well as the rank-and-file allottees. Second, even effective administrators were hampered by the Indian Service’s unimaginative and inflexible bureaucratic approach to the individual agencies’ civic and criminal problems, which throughout the early-twentieth century continued to almost exclusively be based upon a nineteenth-century mold of punishing “resistant” Indians with fines, sentences to agency work-details, and the withholding of entitlements and property.

Conditions on the Flathead Reservation in the 1910s, and reports concerning the “marriage, alcohol, and gambling conditions” on the reservation, aptly demonstrated these problems. On August 3, 1917, Flathead’s Superintendent, Theodore Sharp, reported to the Office of Indian Affairs detailing the inability of the reservation police to contain a widespread gambling culture, particularly among the Kootenais and the “full-blooded”

³⁹ Letter: William Zimmerman, Jr. (Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs) to Senator James E. Murray, December 27, 1935, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 13175, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

Flatheads and Kalispels. “Many Indian have been brought before the Indian Court,” Sharp declared, “[they] received 90 day sentence to work at the agency, but this does not seem to frighten or deter [them].”⁴⁰ Responding August 25, E.B. Merritt, the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, simply recommended that Sharp follow procedures laid out in OIA circulars, which suggested “the withholding of [annuity] funds of those Indians who engage in gambling.” Justifying the denial of tribal property, Merritt stated “Not until the Flathead Indians are made to realize in a practical way that the gambling practice must cease can results be expected.”⁴¹

The withholding of annuities, however, often produced the opposite of the desired result, however, and most often generated little more than resistance and criticism from chiefs and tribal council members, who with virtual unanimity decried the practice as a breach of tribal rights (which it was). Catholic commentary on this practice suggests further that the punitive measures employed by the OIA to “encourage civilized progress” hardened the adversarial relationship between government officials and Indians engaged in “subversive” behaviors. Despite the obvious flaws of the federal approach, both the OIA and the local agencies appeared to be entirely inflexible with their tactics, a problem which appeared to be rooted in budgetary issues - realistically, the OIA lacked the resources to emphasize an approach that incentivized behavioral change - and the strong imperialist and racialized overtones that colored the entire scope of the Dawes Act era civilization program. Early-twentieth century Indian administration was strongly inflected with the dominant racial undercurrent of the United States’ simultaneous

⁴⁰ Letter: Theodore Sharp to the Office of Indian Affairs, Arlee, Montana, August 3, 1917, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 25, Folder 53906, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁴¹ Memorandum: E.B. Merritt to Theodore Sharp, August 25, 1917, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 25, Folder 539906, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.,

expansion of its Pacific and Caribbean Empires, wherein colonial populations were frequently portrayed as “unruly children” in need of structure and discipline. It appears that much of this attitude poured over into the Indian Administration.⁴²

Ineffective administrators, could pose an equally vexing set of problems for the OIA, of which Theodore Sharp was a prime example. Sharp, in some ways, was emblematic of a problem that still, even after the official end to the spoils system, ran endemic through the Indian Service: poor civil servants who bounced around to various agencies rather than being terminated. Sharp’s career began in the early 1900s at the Lapwai Agency where he first ascended to the position of superintendent of the Lapwai School and Sanatorium. He was dismissed following a scandal in 1915 that concerned his own negligence in the mistreatment of several Nez Perce charges by one of his subordinates, Carrie A. Walker. Affidavits collected from Walker’s coworkers, and patients of the sanatorium revealed considerable evidence of Walker’s brutal corporal punishments, and physical abuse of several children interred with the sanatorium as orphans. Sharp claimed ignorance of Walker’s conduct, despite the fact that rumors of Walker’s brutality were quite widespread on the reservation, and he further claimed he never authorized corporal punishment. Ultimately, Commissioner Cato Sells dismissed Walker, but decided Sharp should be saved from charges or termination. Pressure from the Nez Perces themselves, however, forced Sharp’s relocation, and in 1916 he was made Flathead Agency’s Superintendent.⁴³

⁴² See, Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 98-162.

⁴³ OIA File 1413, May 24, 1914 - May 4, 1915, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 8, Folder 1413-15, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, C.H. Asbury, “Report on Situation at Lapwai,” May 27, 1916, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 8, Folder, 000-1916, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

At Dixon, Sharp's incompetence continued. He was frequently accused of excessively incarcerating Indians without sufficient charges. The Flathead Tribal Court, furthermore, accused Sharp of frequently forcing Flathead men into the ninety-day agency work details either without or prior to an actual conviction from the Indian Court. A further scandal occurred in 1919, when a Flathead man, sick with influenza, was jailed on Sharp's order and denied release for medical reasons. The man died in custody, which generated an investigation by the OIA, however, once more, Sharp was exonerated from any criminal wrong-doing. The scandal, nonetheless, disintegrated the last remaining shreds of his credibility with Flathead leaders, and struck a crippling blow to the government's relationship with the tribe more generally.⁴⁴

Considering the limits of the federal government's ability to enforce prohibitions against the sale and use of alcohol, gambling, and itinerance, and the limits of its ability to regulate marriage, the cooperation of chiefs and headmen, sympathetic to these causes became integral. Tribal headman, in many instances, still wielded considerable authority and influence with their bands and kin groups, which could go a long way to shaping the behaviors and attitudes of those who fell under their authority, in a fashion that the legal authority of the agency and the Tribal Court never could match. In particular, headmen wielded an authority over the actions of the young men in their bands - who were the most common offenders of agency regulations - that could not be matched by threats of fines, jail time, or assignment to work details.

One such headman was Chief Koostata of the Kootenais, born in the late nineteenth century, he rose in stature among the Kootenais in the early twentieth century

⁴⁴ *Army Reorganization: Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives, 66th Congress, 1st Session, on H.R. 8287, H.R. 8068, H.R. 7925, H.R. 8870, Sept. 3 1919- Nov. 12, 1919, Parts 23-43* (Washington, D.C.: United States Congress, Committee on Military Affairs, 1919), 2195.

following the deaths of older headmen like Eneas and Michel. Going back to the origins of the Flathead Reservation, the Kootenais, as a rule, had been regarded by the Indian Service as the most problematic denizens of the agency. Much of this reputation was “earned” by a general mistrust of Americans. The Kootenais, up to the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrated little sustained interest in receiving missionaries from St. Ignatius, or from any other sect for that matter. Many of their leaders and prominent men held deep ties to Charlot’s band of Bitterroot Salish, and many respected Charlot and his influence, and echoed his rejection of “Westernization,” being determined, instead, to continue on paths of traditional living, based on subsistence hunting and foraging.⁴⁵

This was the exact milieu out of which Koostata, as Chief of the Kootenais, emerged. Though, for his own part, Koostata, more so than any of his predecessors, saw the value in maintaining good relations with Americans, and particularly with the men who administered Flathead Agency in the early twentieth century, such as Samuel Bellew and Frederick C. Morgan, who were the agents from 1905 until 1916. Koostata, nonetheless, remained a staunch traditionalist, opposed to the general adoption of an agrarian life and strongly in favor of maintaining traditional Kootenai spirituality and culture. Yet, he perceived the political advantages of friendly relations with the agency, particularly when it came to ensuring that tribal rights were upheld, that rations and annuities were not withheld, and ensuring that the Kootenais maintained some semblance of autonomy in governing their own affairs in matters brought before the agency and the Indian Court. Beyond that, Koostata recognized the value of curtailing alcoholism,

⁴⁵ Samuel Bellew, “Report of Agent for Flathead Agency,” *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1905* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1905), 241-243. See also, Robert J. Bigart, *Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 194-224.

gambling, vagrancy, and other petty crimes, and viewed cooperation with the Indian Service on these matters as compatible to his traditionalist views.

Thus, in the 1910s, Koostata emerged as a vocal bulwark against these activities, and bent his influence trying to reign in the members of his band. Koostata's actions, furthermore, demonstrated the survival and transference of pre-reservation forms of Kootenai political and social organization into the agency context. He utilized prominent younger men, who in older times would have formed his bands' warrior class, as an informal set of public watchdogs within the Flathead Reservation's Kootenai community. Koostata and the men who followed his influence, for example, worked to ensure that Kootenai children were enrolled in the government boarding and day schools located in Polson, Jocko, and at Camas Prairie. Ensuring school enrollment emerged as the single most important cornerstone in the maintenance of good relations with the agency at Dixon, as the Indian Service demanded enrollment of school-age children, and established the punishment of truancy with the cancellation of annuities and rations as a standard practice. Koostata furthermore, demanded that young men avoid the town sites - the nearest to the Kootenais being Polson - unless they had cause for work or for errands, and utilized the men and elders who followed him to try and keep Kootenais away from gambling halls and black market liquor sources.⁴⁶

Kootenai individuals who found themselves in frequent trouble with the Indian Police and Indian Courts over matters of vagrancy in the town cites, larceny, and other petty offenses, often found that their chief would offer them little support, as learned by Thomas Antiste, a "half-blooded" Kootenai, in 1912. Antiste, described by the Indian

⁴⁶ Memorandum: C.F. Hauke (Second Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs) to Chief Koostahtah, Jocko, Montana, February 21, 1912, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 18, Folder 11707, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Service and Koostata alike as a “self-styled-chief,” possessed a nefarious reputation at Flathead Agency, and was consistently regarded as a community problem throughout the early twentieth century. Throughout the first decade of the 1900s, and into the 1910s, Antiste, in effort to undermine Koostata’s authority, apparently started requesting monetary donations from enrollees throughout the Flathead Reservation, intending to use the money to support those Kootenai families who choose to keep their children out of the government schools, or whom had been denied their rations or annuities for a variety of other reasons. Antiste also collected donations to finance a month long trip to Washington, D.C., in December 1911, to try and bring a list of grievances against the Kootenais before the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁴⁷

Of course, Antiste also possessed less noble motivations. Allegedly, much of the money he collected also went to support his family and finance a fairly notorious gambling habit that was well-known, and gossiped about in Polson. Allegations also persisted about some of the more nefarious motivations behind Antiste’s agitating. His “Indian Brotherhood,” which frequently gathered at meetings in the town hall was supposedly accepting “donations” from H. E. Rakeman, a Polson “lending jeweler” (pawner) also suspected of illegally selling liquor, and other merchants in the town who despised Koostata and hoped to see his position as Chief of the Kootenais undermined if not altogether obliterated.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Memorandum: Frederick C. Morgan to the Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., January 25, 1912, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 18, Folder 11707, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ Memorandum: Frederick C. Morgan to the Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., January 25, 1912, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 18, Folder 11707, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: Karl Knudsen (resident of Polson, Montana) to Fred C. Morgan (Agent of Flathead Indians), Jocko, Montana, January 17, 1912, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 18, Folder 11707, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

As evidence of the allegations of Antiste's criminal activities started to come to light, Koostata recommended to agent Fred Morgan that the Indian Court have him thrown in jail, a request to which Morgan happily obliged, and from which both men mutually benefited. And yet, while being cooperative, Koostata was far from a simple mouthpiece for Flathead Agency's policies and goals; he instead remained governed by his own convictions that at times overlapped with that of the Indian Service. Koostata offers up an enthralling example of the complexity of Indian agency in the era of allotment, and in an era of Indian-American relations where limited power and influence for Native Peoples is often assumed. On the one hand, the actions of Koostata and similar figures reinforced the effectiveness of certain government policies. A tribal commitment to see certain OIA regulations carried out appears to have been absolutely necessary to successful governance. At the same time, such cooperation between tribal government officials on matters of law and order is also illustrative to those OIA policies that faltered or failed. In instances where agents could not gain the support and cooperation of a reservation's prominent people, they often found themselves fighting against an immovable bulwark of resistance.⁴⁹

Missionaries at St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, and Holy Family held an equal interest in discouraging activities like alcoholism, gambling, and sexual promiscuity, though they – both by ideology and necessity – took a much more light-handed approach. Catholics' primary arenas of social instruction took place within the confines of the church, the schools, clinics, and other services the missions provided for reservation allottees. And

⁴⁹ Memorandum: Frederick C. Morgan to the Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., January 25, 1912, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 18, Folder 11707, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Catholics' messages and methods differed quite greatly from government programs, and even from that of Protestant missionaries.

Protestant missions, such as the Presbyterian Spalding Mission, that persisted into the 1920s on the Fort Lapwai Reservation, under the care of Katherine McBeth, tended to obsess themselves, much like Indian Service, with the remolding of native family and moral structures into a distinctly "Northeastern American," modest sensibility. The critical struggle, then, became ensuring natives assumed proper moral, and properly gendered, roles. Great efforts were taken, to try and "domesticize" "wild" Indian women, whom were often perceived as too "masculine," and too willful to make proper and dutiful wives, so Protestants such as McBeth and the Spaldings frequently tried to introduce young Indian girls to properly "feminine" habits, teaching them to can foods, sow, clean, and perform the other duties of a desirable housewife. At the same time, Protestant missionaries felt men needed to be "masculinized," induced to take the role of house master and provider, and ideology that was often wrapped up with common perceptions, particularly expressed by McBeth, that Nez Perce men, and Indian men more generally, needed convincing and coercion to give up their loves for gambling and drinking, and accept their familial duties and their economic responsibilities.⁵⁰

Thus, Protestants worked, strictly speaking, in a student-instructor relationship with their spiritual charges on the reservations. For Presbyterians and Methodists in particular, the "missionary family" became a model and example for Indians to follow.

⁵⁰ In 1925, Nez Perce Agent Oscar Lipps detailed Presbyterian "progress" on the Nez Perce Reservation under missionary Katherine McBeth, Letter: Oscar H. Lipps to Charles H. Burke, June 13, 1925, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 203, Folder 44686-25, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, on Presbyterian and Protestant Domesticity see, Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1985). Also, Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

This relationship was deeply paternalistic, in the broadest sense, the Protestant converts on Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations were children of a missionary father and, or mother, as such they would be praised for their good conduct and chastised for misbehavior. An outgrowth of this ideology was that Protestant missionaries tended to be - though not always - individualistically focused. The health of the community sprung from individual responsibility, and individuals' willingness to accept their proper societal roles. By and large, as well, this "Protestant Ethic" tended to shape the policy of the Indian Service and the public schools, which focused the greatest portion of their efforts into socializing individuals.⁵¹

The Catholic missions, by contrast, were far more communally focused. The Catholic missions concerned themselves more so with the overall health of the Catholic community that resided around them, founded in the idea that a healthy community produced properly socialized individuals, rather than the other way around. To be sure, concepts of morality, modesty, and gender all played a role in Catholic ideology as well, but to a much-less-pronounced degree. The Protestant missions, and even the Dawes Act and federal Indian Policy, focused on personal rebirth and transformation, into the mold of American family ethics, morality and economy. This approach and belief was deeply rooted in the Great Awakenings, and still in the late-nineteenth century deeply influenced the Presbyterian and Methodist missions in the Northwest and the Indian Service. Catholics, by contrast, viewed themselves as "spiritual stewards" in a long and

⁵¹ Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1985). Also, Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

sedimentary process. This view clearly came forward from figures such as Monsignor William Ketcham, who directed the BCIM from 1901-1921.⁵²

Rather than trying to quickly overhaul social organization entirely, Catholic missionaries focused on introducing Indians to the church, its structures, its rituals, and its teachings. The unspoken assumption that came from this tactic and methodology, was that as Indian peoples more formally and deeply engaged in the church then the transformation of social and familial structures would follow suit. Thus regular practice and attendance of mass emerged as Catholic missionaries' primary concern. Beyond that, Catholics wanted access to children, either of nominally Catholic families, or non-Christian families who were enrolled in the government schools as opposed to the mission schools. Missionaries like Fr. J. Bruckert, S.J., attached to Holy Family Mission, and assigned as a parish priest to the Catholic Church erected Browning in 1907, lobbied to have Catholic children released from the public and Indian Service schools for weekly mass. Points where Catholics felt they were being denied their proper access to their flock produced strong frictions between the missionaries and the administrators of reservations.⁵³

⁵² Correspondence between Ketcham and Fr. Bruckert of Holy Family Mission from 1906, discussing the importance of church attendance, and access to Catholic children in government schools, is revealing as to the BCIM's ideology, which viewed generational exposure to the faith as key to long-term stability for the Catholic communities on Indian reservations. See: Letter, Fr. J. Bruckert to Mons. William Ketcham, September 24, 1906, Browning, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 53, Folder 16, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Mons. William Ketcham to Fr. J. Bruckert, November 5, 1906, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 53, Folder 16, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Mons. William Ketcham to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 5, 1906, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 53, Folder 16, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

⁵³ Letter: Fr. J. Bruckert, S.J., to Mons. William Ketcham, January 17, 1907, Browning, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 57, Folder 11, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Along with mass, Catholics placed great importance upon the practice of the sacraments, with a profound emphasis placed upon baptism and marriage. Baptism symbolized an initiated commitment to the church, both for new converts who sought membership, and for parents who chose to have their children baptized and, therefore, “initiated” in the church themselves. Apart from the standard practice of recording baptisms in the parish registers at St. Ignatius, St. Joseph’s, and Holy Family, the three missions also included baptismal statistics in their quarterly reports to the Bureau of Catholic Missions, more or less using them as a standard metric of evangelical progress. Just how profoundly the commitments symbolized by the sacrament impressed themselves upon Flatheads, Blackfeet, and Nez Perces that participated, however, becomes difficult to determine. Among certain clusters of Catholic families on the three reservations, such as the Pablos, Perrines, and Halfmoons, the consistent baptism of successive generations seems to suggest a considerable attachment to Catholic identity. Yet, the single sacrament, in and off itself hardly provides enough evidence to determine sincerity.⁵⁴

Catholics were equally determined in their effort to track and influence Indian marriages. Couples who hoped to be married in the Catholic churches on the three reservations were required to go through instruction and counseling with missionaries and parish priests, and Catholics worked hard to ensure that the “Catholic” population on the three reservations fully understood the structure of their religious institution, as a solemn and lifelong commitment that could not be dissolved save for grave circumstances. Catholics’ success in imparting these lessons, however, appears to have

⁵⁴ Baptisms reported by missionaries were furthermore tracked by the Office of Indian Affairs, who kept statistics on confessional status, printed annually until 1930 in the reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

produced mixed-results at best. Indeed the Catholic missions succeeded in producing devout followers, who mostly adhered to their tenets, such as Mr. Otis Halfmoon of the Nez Perce Reservation. More generally, however, Catholic messages and teachings tended to be blended together with older standing indigenous practice, misinterpreted, or even reinterpreted.⁵⁵

For example, quarterly reports from the Education Division of the Fort Lapwai Agency, revealed that while many among the ranks of the Catholic and Christian Nez Perces (by 1912, more than 50% of the reservation's Indian population identified as Christian and 275 of about 1500 allottees were considered members of St. Joseph's Parish) indeed understood prohibitions against divorce, they did not grasp the full gravity of this belief. In his report from 1912, filed as the Chief of the Education Division and Superintendent of Fort Lapwai School, Theodore Sharp, claimed that while few if any Catholic Nez Perces filed for divorce with the agency, many among them had separated from the married spouses and were now living "adulterously" with other partners. The prevalence of "Indian custom" marriages – considered by the government to be both adulterous and unlawful – persisted well on into the 1920s. Fort Lapwai Agency considered the practice an education problem, residing with the missions and the schools, since it was not considered a police problem and little effort had been made in "enforcing the marriage laws through the [Indian] courts."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ While parish registers and mission chronicles often just give statistics and names, historian Robert Bigart collected together, with other papers, glimpses of marriage and other sacraments performed at St. Ignatius, through the private letters of missionaries. See, Robert J. Bigart, ed., *A Pretty Village: Documents of Worship and Culture Change, St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, 1880-1889* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Report: Theodore Sharp, "Education-Industries: Marriage Relations Among the Nez Perces," May 17, 1912, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 205, Folder 53943-12, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Memorandum: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 24, 1921, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central

Memos produced from the Blackfeet Agency in Browning, suggest similar patterns, particularly among “non-citizen Indians,” those who had their citizenship suspended in 1906 by the Burke Act until they had been deemed “competent” to receive the patent in fee for their allotted lands. The OIA acknowledged a remaining prevalence, even in 1915, of “Indian custom” divorces and marriages, wherein individuals separated from their legal partners, only to remarry, by “Indian custom,” cohabitate with a new spouse and sometimes produce children. The OIA and Blackfeet Agency also recognized the matter as a problem of education, and further recognized the need for “greater stress [on] the school boys and girls as to the need of entering into the marriage relation only after the performance of a marriage ceremony in accordance with the State law.”⁵⁷

Catholics were left with little recourse to combat this and other misinterpretations of their faith, other than continued efforts at ministry and education. Catholics had no authority to take punitive measures, and, regardless, there existed little institutional interest on the part of missionaries to have a hand in the agencies’ and the Indian Courts’ affairs. And the censure or ostracization of offending “Catholics” among the ranks of the tribal allottees directly conflicted with the missions’ foremost goals of obtaining and maintaining membership.

In spite of these doctrinal failures, Catholics were, nonetheless, experiencing considerable success in organizing communities around their missions and the outlying parishes. The origins of these successes laid in their earliest nineteenth century efforts. The tight-knit Catholic community on the Nez Perce Reservation originally formed from

Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 205, Folder 25292-21, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷ Memorandum: E.B. Merritt to C.L. Ellis (Superintendent of Blackfeet Indian School), June 3, 1915, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-133, Box 5, Folder 026- Marriage and Divorce - 6/15/1915, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

Slickpoo's band, that had resisted the Nez Perce War, continued to grow into the twentieth century. Late nineteenth-century hostility toward Catholics from Protestants, and from Agents like Joseph Monteith, succeeded only in strengthening a fraternal bond among Nez Perces who identified as Catholics, and in strengthening their relationship to the Jesuit priests who had advocated on their behalf in the face of government mistreatment.

Continued growth resided primarily in the efforts of Fathers Emile Boll, S.J., and Thomas Neate, S.J., who took over duties as the mission's Superior Father and superintendent following Cataldo's departure in 1908. It succeeded on the ability to create an integrated Catholic community from among Nez Perce enrollees and non-Indian Catholics brought onto the reservation by allotment. The mission stood at the center of this community as vital organizer of sparse resources for its most vulnerable members. Among the most important roles taken on by St. Joseph's Mission was the care for the affairs and dependents of the deceased. Even into the twentieth century, disease and untimely mortality remained a tragic reality and pressing concern.

On the Nez Perce Reservation, the prevalence of tuberculosis remained a grave matter, in addition to other infectious diseases including influenza, the measles, and mumps, along with other health disorders related to malnutrition, including dysentery, Rickets, and Pellagra. Problems were constantly perpetuated by the limited budget of the Lapwai Sanatorium and the limited resources available to the Sisters of Providence, who operated a clinic from the St. Joseph's Mission School. Though the reservation had consisted of nearly 1,700 enrolled individuals at the turn of the century by the late 1910s, the reservation was beginning to witness a troubling demographic collapse. Between

1918 and 1922, the OIA recorded only 139 births in five years, versus 289 deaths, with the average age of death at thirty years-old, and the main cause of death being tuberculosis.⁵⁸

The most frequent dependents left behind by such tragedy were children under the age of majority, and therefore unable to manage their own affairs in terms of property and heirship, and the elderly left without a family support network. In both cases, St. Joseph's stepped in to do what it could to help maintain their independence and economic security. Where children were concerned, Catholics used the network of the surrounding community, as well as Catholic communities on other reservations, to arrange adoptive parents. If orphans had allotments, or had obtained heirship lands before being able to legally manage them for themselves, Fathers Boll and Neate, along with Charles Lusk, the head legal counsel for the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, attempted, when able, to manage such property on the orphan's behalf, or arrange for a legal guardian to assume temporary liability, until an orphan was old enough to take responsibility for the property. In cases where adoption arrangements could not be made, the mission assumed care for orphans, and its capabilities to act in such a capacity expanded in 1922, when the Slickpoo Mission was designated as an orphanage for the Boise Diocese, and the mission school - now St. Joseph's Academy - was expanded to care for 80 orphans.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Oscar H. Lipps, "Education-Health: Report of Health Conditions at Lapwai Agency," February 16, 1923, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 204, Folder 16673-23, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹ In 1913, Fr. Neate and Boll took management of the affairs for Daniel Slickpoo, who was found adoptive parents in California, and whose heirship lands were leased to help support him. Letter: Fr. Thomas Neate to Mons. William Ketcham, December 30, 1912, Lapwai Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 80, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Full report on conditions, facilities, and functions of schools, sanatorium and mission facilities, OIA File 71414-17, July 19, 1917 - September 3, 1917, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 203, Folder 71414-17, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. OIA File 66081-25, October 7, 1925, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort

As for the elderly members of St. Joseph's, and those unable to work, the church and parish took over organizational efforts, seeing that their property and allotment was maintained, organizing leases, and seeing that individuals were cared for in terms of proper sustenance and medical care to the best of the mission's abilities. The mission encouraged white members of its parish to lease lands and purchased livestock from Nez Perces who could not care for their own property. In elderly care, the eighteen sisters Sisters of Providence, whom had a convent attached to St. Joseph's took on the brunt of the toil, traveling to provide in-home medical care, working farm fields, caring for livestock, and providing food. All of these duties the Sisters assumed in addition to their charges at the school, taking on much of the unheralded work while the Jesuit fathers saw to administrative duties.⁶⁰

In Montana, St. Ignatius and Holy Family adopted somewhat similar roles, though they ministered to larger and far less tightly-bound communities. On the Flathead Reservation, the Catholic presence had spread beyond St. Ignatius, to include a parish in Polson as well. On the Blackfeet Reservation the community coalesced near Holy Family and near Browning, Montana, following the destruction of St. Peter's Mission by a fire in 1908, and its subsequent abandonment. The mission, however, held also within its influence communities and Catholic enclaves in surrounding rural communities like Babb and Heart Butte. Similar to the Nez Perce Reservation, these two Catholic communities' roots stood in the nineteenth century, in the bands of headman like Alexander of the

Lapwai Agency, Box 204, Folder 66081-25, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁰ Concerning the transfer of leases to St. Joseph's for Nez Perce's deemed unable to provide for themselves, Letter: C.F. Hauke to the Secretary of the Interior, November 1, 1913, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 85, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Also, Fr. Joseph Cataldo, et. al., *St. Joseph's Slickpoo Mission Records* (Slickpoo, Idaho: St. Joseph's Mission, 1922).

Kalispels that had converted and settled near the missions. Unlike the Nez Perce community, however, Catholics of varying stripes on the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations were not part of an insular community, bound together by both perceived and real sectarian grievances. Instead, they had grown as enclaves, homestead sites, and towns, dominated by Catholic and Christian “full-bloods” and Métis that attracted others to seek shelter in the community.

Among the largest group of newcomers were “mixed-blood” migrants from the Midwest and immigrants from Canada, over 1,000 of them, who poured into Western Montana after the turn of the twentieth century and settled on Flathead, Blackfeet, and Rocky Boy (formed in 1916, southwest of the Blackfeet Reservation) Reservations. Those who settled on the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations overwhelmingly integrated into the Catholic communities, often intermarrying with Catholic families from the enrolled tribes. For these newcomers, their prior Catholic connections and identities, often eased their transition into the community, and in this fashion, the mission and the faith itself, provided people – who largely arrived with few, if any, contacts or resources – with a vital social network that could help provide them with access to education, work, and assistance.⁶¹

Such was the case for Angela Monroe, of half Cree-Chippewa descent, born in Browning, Montana, in 1906, and the daughter of two Canadian immigrants, who, unfortunately, are unnamed in enrollment records. In 1917, her family gained recognition for tribal rights with the Blackfeet, and she was provided with a voucher from the tribal

⁶¹ Biographical data, and other data pertaining to work, education, and genealogy for migrants and new enrollees in Montana contained in this collection. Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, 1935-42, Boxes 4-11, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

fund to be enrolled in the Holy Family Mission School, which she attended for nine years. She then married another Métis immigrant, Alex Bruno, also of half Cree-Chippewa descent, born in Calgary, Alberta, in 1889, whose parents had been converted by the Oblate Fathers of Western Canada. The couple ultimately made a residence in Browning, and Alex Bruno found work as a laborer for Holy Family Mission.⁶²

The Deschamp family of the Flathead Reservation - and dozens of similarly disposed families found on the two agencies - found similar circumstances to the Angela and Alex Bruno. The patriarch of the family, Henry Deschamp, relocated from Canada to the northern extension of the Flathead reservation, near Kalispell, in the early 1890s. He claimed to be a Métis of Cree and French-Canadian descent. He met, and quickly married, a “mix-raced” Catholic woman from the Flathead Reservation, and converted to Catholicism, himself. His wife, Mary Deschamp, had been raised at St. Ignatius and attended the Ursuline girl’s school. On August 26, 1895, Mary Deschamp gave birth to a son, Joseph, in the small community hospital in Kalispell. With Mary’s death in 1904, and Henry being unable to support his son by himself, he had his son boarded at Ft. Shaw, near Great Falls, Montana. Joseph Deschamp returned to Flathead in 1909, and cared for his father until Henry’s death in 1917, at which point Joseph relocated to the predominantly Catholic and “mixed-race” enclave at Polson, where he arrived without family or resources. He eventually married the daughter of white Catholics who had

⁶² “Application for Registration as an Indian - Angela (Monroe) Bruno,” Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, 1935-42, Box 5, Folder 118, National Archives and Records Administration Washington, D.C. “Application for Registration as an Indian - Alex Bruno,” Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, 1935-42, Box 5, Folder 118, National Archives and Records Administration Washington, D.C.

moved onto the Flathead Reservation, following its allotment, and found work as a baker.⁶³

While Catholic identity bound together people filtering into communities like St. Ignatius, Polson, and Browning, Holy Family and St. Ignatius also attempted to organize resources for, needy, poor, and incapacitated members of their communities, again trying to place the mission at the center of a Catholic support network. Following St. Peter's close in 1908, Holy Family's boarding schools were expanded to accommodate an orphanage for the Diocese of Helena. The orphanage operated by the Sisters of Providence at St. Ignatius was also expanded. Catholics also attempted to fill a regional void in healthcare, with little being offered other than the agency clinics in Browning and Dixon. In 1910, the Helena diocese brought three Sisters of Mercy - Sisters Mary Philomena, Clement, and Vicentia - from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to serve as nurses at a newly opened clinic in Kalispell. In 1912, the Sisters of Mercy contributed \$26,000 to expand the clinic into Kalispell General Hospital. Just south of the Flathead Reservation, in Missoula, Sisters of Providence from St. Ignatius, under the direction of Superior Mother Mary Caron had founded an initial, small clinic in 1873, at the time situated along the Clark Fork River between Indian and white settlements in Flathead and Bitterroot Valleys. By 1889, the Sisters had been able to expand the initial site - largely through funds gathered by donations and "begging tours" - into St. Patrick's hospital, which could serve about 40 patients. The hospital received a commitment of money in 1923, and finally expanded into a modern facility with 150 beds. The expansion was

⁶³ "Application for Registration as an Indian - Joseph Deschamp," Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, 1935-42, Box 6, Folder 157, National Archives and Records Administration Washington, D.C.

designed to accommodate a Catholic population in the vicinity which was by the 1920s in the thousands, split between the 2,100 enrollees on the Flathead Reservation and the settler populations in the surrounding and outlying communities. Polson, situated on the reserve, and its largest community, held a population of 1,132 in 1920. Missoula, by 1920, housed 12,668 souls, and Kalispel, by 1920, had a population of 5,147.⁶⁴

A secondary and more subtle role played by the missions was that of a *de facto* public watchdog, that worked with the Indian Service on matters of mutual concern. The missions and their attached parishes operated as an informal information gathering network, as rumors and accusations of illicit behavior filtered from the hands and mouths of missions' parishioners, to the priests and sisters, and into the hands of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Indian Service. Even only moderately devout Catholic converts among the Flatheads, Blackfeet, and Nez Percés, tended to view alcoholism, gambling, and idleness or itinerance (a problem present, almost universally, across the three reservations, related to young men who were frequently seen "lying about" in the towns rather than working or living on their allotments) as serious social problems that plagued their communities. As such, they often kept their eyes and ears open for word of gambling halls, speakeasies, stills, and other "black market" enterprises that were scattered around the reservations, and Catholics frequently passed this information on to the superintendents, the Indian police, and the Indian Courts.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ William Lyle Davis, *A History of St. Ignatius Mission: An Outpost of Catholic Culture on the Montana Frontier* (Spokane, WA: C.W. Hill Printing Company, 1954). Also, Kathryn L. McKay, *A Guide to Historic Kalispell* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society, 2001). Also, Allan James Matthews, *A Historic Guide to Missoula* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society, 2002).

⁶⁵ Reservation conditions, including gambling, liquor consumption, etc., were frequent subjects of Catholic Correspondence with the Department of the Interior, and with the agents of the Reservations. More than that, Catholics like Otis Halfmoon and Edward Cashcash appear to have acted as "town-criers" Letter: Fr. George de la Cotte to the Secretary of the Interior, January 25, 1911, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 75, Folder 8, Marquette University Special

The Catholic missions were also keenly attuned to accusations of corruption or crime within the Indian Agencies themselves. Going back to the sectarian clashes caused by the Peace Policy, the Catholic missionaries had, with near constancy, been in the ears of Congress and the Department of the Interior regarding the complaints and grievances of Catholics and Catholic Indians lodged against hostile government agents. Even into the twentieth century, this practice continued, particularly when agents were less than cooperative with Catholic goals, even if these complaints lost some of their opaque sectarian overtones.⁶⁶ The easing of strictly sectarian conflict, also opened Catholic missionaries' gaze to agency actions that were considered more generally detrimental to interests of the tribal enrollees as a whole, and not just the Catholic population. The most prominent example of this became the allegations of corruption in the administration of Flathead Superintendent William Smead (Superintendent from 1897 to 1904), first lodged by Fathers William McMillan, and J. D'Aste of St. Ignatius Mission through the BCIM in 1901, leading to Smead's ultimate dismissal in 1904.

Accusations of Smead's corruption first surfaced from a list of complaints, compiled by McMillan and D'Aste, sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones (Commissioner from 1897 until 1904) by Mons. Ketcham, in which the missionaries reported Smead had exacted taxes on the wages earned by Flatheads who had done work for St. Ignatius. Further complaints of corruption arose in 1903, when Smead organized a grazing tax that specifically targeted Métis ranchers like Joseph Morrigneau and Michel Pablo. Smead claimed the taxes were meant to raise revenue for

Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Burton L. French to Cato Sells, Washington, D.C., January 19, 1918. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 205, Folder 5133-18. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁶ Letter: Fr. J. Bruckert, S.J., to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 7, 1907, Browning, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 57, Folder 11, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

improving reservation access roads, but boiling discontent (particularly on the part of Morrigau, who intended to resist the tax, violently if necessary), and the fact that roads were the responsibility of the counties and not the reservation did nothing to quell allegations that Smead was lining his pockets with ill-gotten money. Rumors grew in 1903, when Smead levied a grazing tax on mission cattle, despite an exemption afforded them by the tribal council. Complaints from Ketcham on behalf of the Mission priests had the Secretary of the Interior void the taxes, and raised suspicions against Smead. Finally, a high profile court case involving the United States' Attorney on behalf of Michel Pablo against Missoula County, involving unlawful taxation, set to be filed in early 1904, again heightened the attention of the Indian Service to the irregularities taking place on the reservation. That same year, an Indian Service investigation discovered evidence of bribes accepted by Smead from cattle ranchers who possessed no grazing rights on the reservation, and used it as grounds to dismiss him.⁶⁷

The Catholic "information network" also served more than a simple "whistle-blowing" purpose. Frequently, Indian Service investigations into reservation conditions and inquiries into individual allottees' competence, and ability to manage their own property and their own affairs, frequently ran across the desks of the missionaries of the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations. This was the case because it was assumed that the missionaries were well-informed and aware of the on-the-ground conditions of their communities as well as the status of individuals within the community.

⁶⁷ Letter: William Ketcham to William A. Jones, October 23, 1901, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 42, Folder 12, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "Report of Agent William Smead for Flathead Reservation," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 16-1-1, Box 9, Folder 6, pg. 230, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee WI. Letter: Fr. Van Gorp, S.J., to William Ketcham, March 28, 1903, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 45, Folder 15, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. *United States v. Heyfron*, in *Digest of Decisions of United States Courts*, Vol. 9 (Westlaw Publishing Company, 1914), 964-966.

In essence, the church and the missionaries worked as a knowledge-resource that could be employed and utilized by both reservation residents and the government alike.

A Crossroads of Civilizations

Seeking to explain the experience of conversion within the context of the missions and the Indian Reservations, we have to quickly abandon the safety of linear narratives and neat typologies. There was no one experience, or limited set of experiences that typified the consequences of contact in Indian Country. Rather, “conversion” became a systemic force that acted upon everyone involved: Americans, religious societies, governments, and Indian peoples. This system produced a vast and dizzying array of outcomes, too widely variable in their natures to ever be neatly sorted. As such, any endeavor to try and quantify an “authenticity” of experience - Indian peoples who became “authentically” Catholic or Christian, or who became “authentically” Americanized - becomes a difficult enterprise.

At the same time, we find ourselves forced to abandon our conventional notions about the operation of imperial systems, and about the degradation and destruction of “traditional, indigenous lifeways” by colonial “civilization” programs and religious evangelization. At no point, in the history of the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce peoples and reservations, were “civilization” and “evangelization” powerful enough influences to override eons of cultural memory and institutions. Human agents are not like computer hard drives, their memories and contents cannot simply be deleted or overwritten. As such, we cannot simply quantify the spread of Christianity by counting baptisms or tracking church attendance, we cannot assume that Christianity overpowered indigenous systems of spirituality. We can neither assume, however, that Christian and

Catholic influence remained solely contained to baptisms, and the services held inside the church. Likewise, we cannot quantify secular conversion by counting allotments, and tracing how many allottees built permanent homes and improved the lands they were given. We cannot assume that sedentary and agricultural lifeways overpowered indigenous modes of life and living entirely. Instead of finding one civilization overpowered by another we find the construction of new civilizations and new milieus, born out of the dissonance caused by the collision of multiple peoples and cultures. It forces us into a reconsideration of how systems of colonization and contact truly interact.

Imagine dropping three stones into a still pool of water. Each stone produces a ripple that represents a different institution, one represents the institutions of the growing and expanding United States, the other represents the Catholic missionary effort, and the last represents centuries of indigenous culture and memory. The place where the three ripples run together, and become distorted and intermingled, represents the early and modern Indian reservations as they developed, an often chaotic and incoherent mixture of multiple forces. Where the ripples run together, it becomes impossible to determine, with certainty, the boundaries of where one force ends and another begins. That also becomes, ultimately, an unimportant determination to make, for in and of itself, the meeting place of those once, three distinct ripples, is a new creation independent of, and yet equally dependent upon, the dropping of those three stones.

The first half of this study has attempted to lay out, in as complex a fashion as possible, the origins and foundations of a nuanced and syncretistic world. It is a story, centuries in the making, of the movement of peoples, ideas, and civilizations, onto the geographic entities we recognize as the modern Indian reservation. It seeks to recover the

history of reservations for what they truly were, not simply the consequences of Western expansion and conquest, but rather the result of a complex set of interactions between Americans and North America's Indigenous Peoples. Government agencies, tribal leaders, and religious societies all held a role in shaping and negotiating their creation. Rather than segregating and isolating the remnants of North America's indigenous population from the history and development of the new American Nation, the reservations in fact blended and changed the racial and cultural identities of all the people who called Indian Country home.

The second half of this study will now attempt to explain and describe the contours and characteristics of this "Crossroads of Civilizations," and delve into its limits and consequences. The following chapter will focus in on the growing and continuing racial and cultural ambiguity, and heterogeneity, of the reservations, and seek to tie the modern evolution of Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce cultures to a deep history of cultural fluidity, adaptation, evolution, and the cycles of change that have provided the dominant motif of human history on the North American continent. Chapter six, conversely, will focus on the conflicts that continued to wrack this syncretistic world, and threatened to tear it asunder. And, finally, it will seek to demonstrate the emergence of these modern confederated tribes, as we recognize them today, as a product of constant exchange and syncretism. The final chapter will then look at the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act, and the inauguration of the Indian New Deal, in 1934, as an affirmation of the multicultural and syncretistic trends already underway on the reservations in the final years of the allotment era, rather than as a watershed of reform in the history of American Indian governance.

Chapter V

The Changing Face of Indian Country

Place yourself on the southern shore of Flathead Lake in the mid-1920s. Seventy years earlier it had been a remote prairie nestled in the floor of a glacial valley. Seasonally, the whole southern rim of the lake, from Polson Bay to Big Arm, would have been dotted by the camps of Kootenais and Kalispels, which bustled around camp fires as women processed the spoils of hunts - tanning hides, dehydrating meats - and men crafted and prepared tools for their next excursion. Their herds would have surrounded the camp, and further out, bison would have dotted the valley floor. Perhaps you would have caught a glimpse of Kootenais or Kalispels swimming some of their horses out to Wild Horse Island, several dozen feet out into the lake, to protect them from thieves and raiders, and likely parties of Coeur d'Alenes and Bitterroot Salish, and even Nez Perces and friendly Blackfeet bands would have intermittently arrived for commerce and other spiritual and community rituals that bound their collective social worlds together.

By the mid-20s, all of this would have been completely gone. Standing in its place is the town of Polson, Montana, with a population of between 1,200 and 1,300 souls. Polson stood laid out along U.S. Highway 93, constructed in 1926, which ran the length of bay to the source of the Flathead River. To a modern sensibility, this would still be a quiet and pastoral scene, with the only interruptions coming from the boilers of paddlewheel steamers, that made the daily trip, chugging out of Polson Bay, bound for Big Fork or Kalispell about 20 miles away on the northern shore. The steamers connected Polson, and Lake County, Montana, for that matter, to the Great Northern Railway, which possessed a divisional depot in Whitefish and subsidiary track for service to Kalispell. For anyone old

enough to remember a time before Polson, however, and in the mid-1920s there were a lot of people who fit that description, it was a radically different geography, both human and physical.

Sunday mornings would have always broken with the clang of bells, coming from the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception, and calling its parishioners to mass. The people filing into the church were a mixed lot: Hispanic migrant laborers who seasonally filtered in and out of the community, whites who settled Polson, and both “mixed-race” and “full-blooded” native people who lived in town and in the surrounding areas. They would have come by a mixture of gas-powered vehicles and horse-drawn conveyances that clogged up the tiny two-lane highway into town, until they all found their spots around the church. Immaculate Conception, like all the surrounding parishes was, in and of itself, a cultural melting pot. As a default equalizer, masses were said in a language equally alien to the entire laity, Latin. Otherwise, within Immaculate Conception’s walls, one could hear a hodge-podge of French, German, Italian, and the other mother-languages of immigrant Jesuits, along with Spanish, English, and a mixture of Indian languages including Salish, Kootenai, and a Cree-Algonkin language shared by many of the “mixed-race” peoples who resided in the community. For brief moments a certain egalitarianism might have come into focus, so many people from so many backgrounds, but bound together in the belief of salvation and sin.

Stepping back out onto the main street, we find a scene not all that dissimilar from what was observed in the church. During the summertime, main street Polson would have been a fairly bustling place. You would see mixed groups of Indians, Hispanics, and whites, all men, sitting by the side road, passing the time by playing cards. More than

likely, these men are day-laborers, who support themselves through the wages earned bouncing from one odd-job to the next. For the most part, many Latin Americans would be found congregating near the rooming houses, or gathering near trucks where both white and native ranchers hired them and prepared to move them out of town and to a job site. The general stores and feed stores are busy with a mixed clientele of Indians and Americans, coming to buy supplies and groceries, loading up their vehicles before returning to the outlying valley floor, or the smaller nearby towns like Dayton. You would see both Indians and whites perched alongside Highway 93, too, selling cherries and other foodstuffs they had picked or grown from their land.

Of course, the scene on main street would not be exactly identical to the one observed in the church. Any egalitarian sensibility conveyed by communion in worship would not be present. There would be no equivalent of Latin, or any other field-leveling means of interaction. On main street the dominant language of commerce and power is English, and it forces outsiders to adapt to the system. The Polson Men's Business Association, whose membership includes the grocers, dry goods and general merchants, the lending jeweler, and most of the other various proprietors, is predominantly - though not exclusively - white. By eastern standards these men are not even moderately wealthy, yet they come as close to an economic elite as you will find in the region. The small county courthouse, too is mostly dominated by Polson's non-Indian population, though it includes some "mixed-race" people as well. The attorneys, judges, and other professionals who administer the town and the surrounding county, have mostly come from outside the community, and even outside the region, where they had access to formal training,

education, and other privileges not found anywhere near the southern shore of Flathead Lake.

You would detect a class divide too. Landholders, ranchers, men and women of capital, they come to Polson's main street to procure what they need, whether that be feed for their stock, tools, or labor for hire. These same men and women retreat from Polson when their errand is done, returning to their land and their holdings. Most of the people milling around on main street, however, are there for an entirely different purpose. They come to seek employment, or to fill the hours with some sort of excursion or distraction if there is no work to be had on that particular day. The same sort of ethnic and cultural barriers that set apart, and bound together, the community's elites are less pronounced among the day-laborers, ranch-hands, and small-time farmers that form Polson's working poor. The day-to-day business of their lives is almost always spent in mixed company. They converse with one another in a pidgin language of English, Spanish, and native words and turns of phrase. They bare the fraternal bonds of an outsider's status, even if it cannot completely overcome the wide the cultural and ethnic gulfs that stand between them as individuals.¹

If you spent a day in Polson in the mid-1920s, it would not look all that dissimilar from any other small ranching town or railroad spur that could be found across Montana, or the American West for that matter. The stark divisions of class, the ethnic and racial diversity, and the Catholic Church's ability to - in some small way - at times bridge those differences, that defined Polson, Montana, were a quite common feature of many towns and locales around the early-twentieth century American West. This reality challenges

¹ Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1984), 232-279. Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

long-held historical notions of the “isolated, island communities” that dotted America’s former frontier. Popular culture further entrenched, in the American imagination, the idea of the small Western town as a homogenous, insular, and communitarian institution. Popular culture renditions ranging from the idealized setting of *Bonanza* to the exaggerated farce of *Blazing Saddles* all contain common threads and motifs. The denizens of the fictionalized “Palookaville” are almost always universally white and Protestant. The religious gathering space doubles as the primary arena of politics as well, and the citizenry, while all individualists and entrepreneurs, work communally toward a common, best-interest. Every person fills a role or niche in a perfectly interdependent system.²

Of course, the typologies and agents employed by television shows and movies are not simply baseless Hollywood fantasies conjured up out of a thin air. They are based, at some level, in a Turnerian tradition of historical interpretation that is as operative in American culture and politics today as it ever was, even as Western History scrambles to detach itself from Turner’s “frontier thesis.” The characters are representations of an idealized memory of the American frontier, and its relationship to democracy. For the westward pioneers - white, American, Protestants - the frontier produced opportunity and equality, by pitting them in struggle with a “nature” that included harsh weather, dry land, and “wild savages.” So, naturally, in the popular culture universe, trouble and strife are almost always introduced by outsiders, whose racial or ethnic status is as alien to the insular community as their background. Outsiders bring unwelcome change, and are either

² “Island Communities” was the depiction of famous organizational historian Robert Wiebe, who argued that the small towns in the rural regions of the United States existed as cloistered social and cultural islands until integrated with technologies like the rail lines, telecommunications, and other inventions that made mass cultural possible. See, Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1967).

one-dimensionally hostile, or forced to “earn” their place and acceptance among the otherwise homogenous society.³

Such depictions poignantly bring forward the ideologies, attitudes, and concerns that faced historical Westerners, even if they fall far short of an accurate portrayal of what life in the West was like. Indeed the West was as much a flashpoint of cultural and racial friction as it was a meeting ground for disparate peoples and modes of thought. The divides of class and race that existed in the American West, however, were a product of its diversity, and the small-scale proximity of its scope: people from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that stood worlds apart, thrown together in towns of barely more than one thousand souls. Encounters in the American West were not solely the product of modernity, or the mobility it fostered. Though we often associate cultural and racial heterogeneity in the American West with industrialization and the forces of change unleashed by World War II, to some extent, this “melting pot” already existed, even in the small towns, long before the explosive growth of metropolitan centers like Los Angeles or Seattle.⁴

Heterogeneity as a rule rather than as an exception was all-the-more true for the communities that dotted the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations. It was a reality, which on the surface, seems counter-intuitive, considering the theoretical intent of the reservation system as it came into being the mid-nineteenth century. Its basic purpose

³ Still standing as a standard of the image of the American West in American Culture is Henry Nash Smith’s comprehensive study. See, Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 1950). See Also, Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *From Virgin Land to Disney World: Nature and Its Discontents in the USA of Yesterday and Today* (Amsterdam, Rodopi Press, 2001). Also, Armando Jose Prats, *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁴ To some extent were often blinded to the inherent diversity of the American West because for so long historical and mythological narratives emphasized Anglo-settlement and marginalized other narratives and realities. See, Martin Heusser and Gudrun Grabher, eds., *American Foundational Myths* (Wurttemberg, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2002).

seemingly had been to confine and control the remnants of the continent's native past to make way for the American Nation's future. Implicit in this relationship was the notion of two, incompatible civilizations that never could nor would coexist. Just as the reservation system came together in an ersatz fashion, however, as the product of hundreds of individual negotiations and variations, it continued to evolve in scope and intent, changing from refuges for a "historically-doomed" way of life to laboratories of contact and acculturation. Even going back to the initial treaties, we see that "non-Indians" were, from the outset, a ubiquitous feature of reservations, and allotment only heightened this reality, bringing thousands of "non-Indians" onto the reservations, to live shoulder-to-shoulder by the enrolled and allotted members of the confederated tribes. Perhaps the most striking feature of Polson, Montana, in the mid-1920s was that if you gazed around the southern shoreline of Flathead Lake, you might easily forget you were standing at the very heart of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation.⁵

The Frontier of Imagination Meets the Frontier of History

"A nation thrown back upon itself:" this is how eminent Western Historian John Mack Faragher characterized Frederick Jackson Turner's own interpretation of his, now-infamous "Frontier Thesis."⁶ Turner's orientation was looking forward, with grim worry, rather than simply attempting to account for the past. From where he stood in 1893, the United States stood at a turning point - in Turner's mind - about to venture forth from the central characteristic that, too that point, had defined the American nation: the passing of

⁵ Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1984), 232-279. Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁶ John Mack Faragher, ed., *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," and Other Essays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.

its “Great Frontier.” For Turner, the open and “empty” - neither Turner nor his students really considered the frontier fully virgin and empty - Frontier was the force that gave American history its shape, its order, and its structure. The West was a release valve for the pressures of immigration, an economic engine churning out endless opportunity, and a democratizer that forced social order in the face of natural discord. The West focused and directed the energy of the American Nation and its institutions. “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” was that it provided the drive and organization of American History. The frontier’s “passing” from the perspective of the essay was certainly not positive, and possibly negative. What now, would give shape and order to American energy?⁷

Turner was, at his most basic core, a progressive historian, deeply influenced by the early American university seminar system that was firmly entrenched in a German intellectual mode and style of thought. The pathways of his thought were firmly bounded by a dialectical conceptualization of history. Conflict was the constant and consistent driving force of history, between opposing forces of order of chaos. The various epochs of human existence, then, were defined by the resolution of conflicts of old, and emergence of new forms of chaos that were borne forth from an emerging synthesis. As such, for Turner, American History had been defined by the struggle between civilization and “nature” or “savagery” - the two forces are not entirely distinct from one another in Turner’s thought.⁸

Turner's vision established an order and linearity to the interpretation of American History, a struggle between man and nature, and civilization and savagery, commenced by

⁷ John Mack Faragher, ed., *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” and Other Essays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁸ Martin Ridge, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Wisconsin’s Historian of the Frontier* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986). Also, Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

the first Europeans to reach North America's shores. In particular he looked to the settlers and settlements from the British Isles, responsible for the transplantation of ideals and institutions from - what Marxist and Progressive Historians termed - the English Revolution to America: individual liberties, property rights, and political sovereignty based in the consent of the people. A century later, having secured a common identity in those principles, and independence from the British Empire, Americans set out, spreading their ideals and institutions across the continent. The seeking of fortune and opportunity drove Americans west, and the enterprise of westward movement harnessed the resources, drive, and focus of the nation. All of this is relatively simple to understand, yet, what synthesis did America achieve with the passing of its frontier in the 1890s?⁹

Turner's dialectic seemingly breaks, then, in 1890. There is no noticeable resolution of thesis and antithesis, instead, one force - civilization - completely overcomes the other - nature. Even a number of Neo-Turnerians, like Frederick Merk and Walter Prescott Webb, followed similar patterns. Webb, specifically, in his *The Great Frontier*, traced the ascendancy of the American nation back to Western Europe through a series of dialectics: with aristocracy being borne of a struggle between feudal lords and the Roman Church, representative government and capitalism arise together as a synthesis of the struggle between aristocrats and professionals, giving a birth to the colonial enterprise and crucible out of which the United States emerges. One interpretation for this breakdown, in strictly materialist and Marxist-Hegelian terms, would be that the Turnerian interpretive tradition prizes the establishment of a continental United States as the ultimate destination of the course of - at least Western Civilization's - history. This, at least, is the source of a strong

⁹ John Mack Faragher, ed., *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," and Other Essays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

association between Turner's thesis and isolated notions of "Manifest Destiny" and "American Exceptionalism," and that relationship has garnered the majority of Turner's criticism from historians since the 1960s, as the far more pessimistic tone of the New Left quickly leapt at the opportunity to excoriate Turner's frontier for its triumphalism.¹⁰

This interpretation, however, is probably more fairly applied to some of Turner's followers than to the man's work itself. The triumphalist tones of "Manifest Destiny" and "American Exceptionalism" do not quite so easily gel with the deep seated pessimism of Turner's own observations on the significance of America's frontier history. As such, an alternative interpretation warrants consideration. Perhaps, the passing of Turner's frontier offered no synthesis of opposing forces, simply because Turner could not see it, or was blind to it. For one, Turner declared the "frontier" - however you might want to define that term - closed far too early. He was describing its significance while large swathes of the American West remained under the territorial system, and while much of the interior West still had population densities in the single-digits-per-square-mile. Turner's gaze, furthermore, concerned itself only with large imperial and economic systems, not small local realities. That an "Indian" way of life had passed into history - symbolized by the tragedy among the Sioux at Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance - mattered more than the fact that Indians still lived and still carved out their places in the West and among its people. The end of Turner's dialectic was less a function of its profundity than its limits.¹¹

Whether he could see it, or not, however, a new synthesis was entering its incubation all around Turner as he penned his famous essay. The idea of the birth of the

¹⁰ See, Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2003 - Originally Published 1951). Also, Frederick Merk, *A History of the Westward Movement* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978). Also, Frederick Merk and Lois Bannister Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

¹¹ Alex Wagner Lough, "Henry George, Frederick Jackson Turner, and the 'Closing' of the American Frontier," *California History* 89 (2012), 4-23.

modern West as a dialectical synthesis of opposing forces and civilizations - taking the frontier dialectic and revising, and continuing it - emerges, quite possibly, as a radical compromise between traditions of Turnerian historical interpretation and the School of the New Western History, that has so long, so arduously, and so futilely sought to escape the reach of Turner's shadow. The Modern West, indeed, seemed a "nation thrown back on itself." The passage of the settlement frontier was not a denouement, but just the opening of new frontiers and horizons. The evolution and synthesis underway remained largely undetectable on a macro-scale that only considers the movement of material, commerce, and power. It was not going to be seen from railway maps, and territorial boundaries, but from the mundane substance of everyday life in the American West's little communities.¹²

Though the camps of old were gone, the bison were fading, the open range was being fenced in, people remained and adapted. Even as allotment and cultural hegemony railed at the "vast tribal body" like a great "pulverizing machine" native people, native thought, and native institutions persisted, not unchanged, but neither sullied. That towns like Polson, Montana, now sat atop lands that once contained native camps and villages did not signal a decline or disappearance of a deeper a regional history. The reality of the early-twentieth century in places like the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations was that Indian Country was not disappearing, but only becoming a far more complex and dynamic place.

¹² Martin Ridge, "Frederick Jackson Turner and His Ghost: The Writing of Western History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 101 (1991), 65-76. Also, Michael Steiner, "From Frontier to Region: Frederick Jackson Turner and the New Western History," *Pacific Historical Review* 64 (1995), 479-502. Also, T.R.C. Hutton, "Beating a Dead Horse?: The Continuing Presence of Frederick Jackson Turner in Environmental and Western History," *International Social Science Review* 77 (2002), 47-58.

The New Constituents of Indian Country

During the fundamental shift in how academics approached Native-American History, starting in the 1970s, ethnohistorians and anthropologists, started to reshape how they understood the worlds of Natives People. What emerged from this "reimagining" of Indian Country, was an increased call for historians to embrace plurality and description and dispense with generalizations. It was agreed that there existed no single "Indian" experience, but multitudes of "Indian experiences." Yet, to prevent a complete atomization of the field, abiding themes of history could not be completely forsaken. Thus, "Indian Country," as it came to be understood, in the imaginings of path finding synthetic works, like Daniel Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country* and Colin Calloway's *New Worlds for All*, was a zone of contact, exchange, and syncretism. Indian peoples were not simply passive objects of history being solely acted upon by the agents of change brought over the Atlantic Ocean during the Age of Exploration. Instead, they existed in a dynamic and evolving world that not only absorbed and expressed the introduction of new influences, but also profoundly changed the new comers to Indian Country.¹³

Conquest, settlement, confinement, and the reservations did absolutely nothing to interrupt Indian Country's pluralistic dynamism, and instead merely represented the opening of a new chapter of experiences and influences. Allotment, often characterized as a renewed invasion of Indian Country, tends to draw focus to what was taken away from tribes and their domains, in terms of land and resources, and little focus has been given to

¹³ See, Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010). Also, Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Also, Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Also, Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians Europeans and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2013). Also, James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

what this "invasion" added. Allotment brought countless new agents into Indian Country, weaving their lives together with that of the people who were placed on tribal rolls and allotted lands. The influences of new identities, ethnicities, and cultures brought into Indian Country even indelibly changed the confederated Indian nations themselves, and redefined Indianness and belonging in places that were quickly becoming among the most diverse and dynamic communities in the United States.¹⁴

These social and cultural changes introduced by allotment, were, of course, nothing entirely unprecedented and new. Rather, they represented a continuation of the processes of contact, adaption, and compromise that had shaped the regional history of the Northwest, and the peoples who became the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nations for centuries. Traders from French Canadian and Canadian First Nation communities were among the older additions to these cultures - not including the multitudes of contact experiences and social changes that had brought the Flatheads, Kalispels, Kootenais, Piegans, Siksikas, Kainais, Nez Perces, Cayuses, and Walla Wallas to the point at which they had stood when Isaac Stevens arrived in 1855. New American settlers, ranchers, and farmers, along with missionaries themselves, constituted the second major wave of newcomers after the treaties. The twentieth century brought more new influences, still, adding to the complex social and cultural fabric already in existence.¹⁵

The simple mechanics of how allotment changed the human geography of the reservations deserves some attention here. As it is often assumed that, yes, allotment fundamentally changed the makeup of reservations - turning them into patchworks -

¹⁴ See, Donald L. Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2011).

¹⁵ From the very moment of contact, Indian Country had universally become a place of cultural fluidity, as both settlers and Native Peoples adapted and changed themselves according to the new influences they were being immersed into. See, Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 1998).

without much thought given to how the changes took place. Alienation, and the sale of lands to the general public, obviously produced the most noticeable changes, as it physically brought property that fell within the bounds of reservations outside of the aegis of tribal ownership. This presented a somewhat radical change compared to the early-arriving whites who had obtained rights of usage without ever legally obtaining ownership of land. Changes were perhaps most pronounced in the town sites, which most often grew from small homestead sites to checker boarded, multi-ethnic communities. Though they stood on the reservations, and stood under the jurisdiction of the agency and of the Indian Service, most of the towns on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations quickly became checkerboards of privately owned property. The expansion of settlements into incorporated towns around the missions and other sites on all three reservations, including St. Ignatius (incorporated in 1938), Browning, Montana, built around the agency site; and Cul de Sac, Idaho, a town which grew near St. Joseph's.¹⁶

As for bringing non-native peoples onto the reservations – and not only changing the legal makeup of the reservations – leasing had even more profound impact than the sale of lands. From the earliest phases of allotment, leasing had been perhaps the most defining feature of the economy on the Nez Perce Reservation. Many Nez Perce allottees acted solely as landlords. They maintained parts of their property as home sites, and to manage their own holdings of livestock, and then generally leased the remainder of their lands to

¹⁶ As a broad overview, allotment passed lands from tribal status to private ownership by a number of means. Technically, even allotments made in trust put the land in private status, a transaction that was finalized by the issue of a patent, which allowed an allottee to dispose of their property as they saw fit. Otherwise lands could be made surplus and, thus, for sale, or could pass into surplus if they were alienated or uninheritable. See, Leonard A. Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 1981). Furthermore, under this system, organizations like the Catholic Missions could receive allotted lands and title to those lands for mission purposes. Memorandum: Fr. I. Dumbeck, S.J., to Mons. William Hughes, June 14, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

white tenant farmers who could manage and develop the plots in virtually any manner they saw fit, so long as they could afford to pay lease fees.¹⁷

Though never developed to the same extent, leasing also grew as a practice on the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations, particularly after allotting schedules, put into place in 1917, came to be implemented. Between 1917 and the deepening of the Depression in the 1930s significant numbers of whites moved onto the reservations as tenants of allotted landlords. Leasing could be and was undertaken as well by allottees and tribal members. This practice emerged on the Blackfeet Reservation, and - perhaps most prevalently - on the Flathead Reservation, where mixed-blood “quasi cattle barons” like the Pablo and Morrigneau families of the Flathead Reservation purchased extra lands and leased from other allottees in order to acquire the land base that was necessary to support their large livestock holdings.¹⁸

Leasing practices, furthermore, drummed up a demand for workers that came from outside the ranks of the three reservations’ enrolled and allotted populations. Allottees who could forge a good working relationship with a reliable tenant, and therefore draw a predictable annual income off of their lands, were generally not all that disposed to simultaneously file into wage labor jobs. Thus, generally speaking, those allotted households who chose to try and develop their allotments on their own, along with the

¹⁷ Report: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 24, 1926, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 9, Folder 47951-1926, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ “Inspection Report: General Conditions of Flathead Reservation,” June 28, 1909, Jocko, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 27, Folder 52882, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. “Inspection Report: General Conditions of the Blackfeet Reservation,” April 24, 1915, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Blackfeet Agency, Box 33, Folder 32216, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. “Inspection Report: General Conditions of the Blackfeet Reservation,” May 13, 1919, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Blackfeet Agency, Box 35, Folder 12419, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. “Inspection Report: General Conditions of Flathead Reservation,” January 29, 1924, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Box 144, Folder Reservation Conditions, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

whites who moved onto the reservations as tenants required a market of wage labor to help grow and sustain their ventures, and to a great degree this market looked beyond the bounds of the reservation to fill demand.¹⁹

The primary engine bringing outsiders onto the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations likely would have been the labor-intensive nature of the major agricultural businesses centered on the three reservations. Cattle ranching dominated the economies of all three reservations. This was the case because cattle-raising was an activity to which the three reservations were best-suited, environmentally. Prevalent weather patterns along both fronts of the Northern American Rockies contributed to long, harsh winters and short growing seasons. The alpine and plateau-like ecosystem that dominated much of the Flathead Reservation contributed to the natural growth of high-quality grazing grasses, while the arid conditions found on the Columbia Plateau and on the Eastern Front of the Rockies contributed to the proliferation of sprawling pasturelands and little else. Government subsidization of the cattle industry contributed to its prevalence, too. Each year the individual agencies haggled to acquire cattle that would then be dispersed into the private herds of Indian allottees. Furthermore, grazing lands possessed by the reservations fell outside the normative bounds of state jurisdiction, and therefore could be exempted from taxes, fees, and other expenses that state governments normally placed on private cattle ranching. Lastly, cattle ranching expanded so rapidly because, of all of the agricultural pursuits that the government attempted to introduce to the three reservations, it most closely resembled Native People's own familiar herding subsistence strategies. Even

¹⁹ "Hearing Held Before E.B. Meritt," January 12, 1926, Lapwai Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder 78539, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, "Inspection Report: General Conditions of Flathead Reservation," January 29, 1924, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Box 144, Folder Reservation Conditions, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

at the time of the treaties, the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces had already owned their own herds of cattle that had been acquired from traders and by various other means. The activity, furthermore, was compatible with native husbandry traditions concerning the raising of horses, sheep, and other herding animals. At least seasonally, ranching operations required extra hands for steering, roundups, and brandings, in addition to the labor required to move cattle from pasture to pasture, bale excess hay and grass for winter storage, and maintain fence lines and facilities.²⁰

While cattle ranching would have seasonally required large amounts of unskilled labor, it also would have placed a constant demand for skilled workers who possessed well-developed equestrian skills and knowledge of livestock. While much of the need for this kind of work could be filled domestically from within the three reservations, undoubtedly some Hispanic migrants would have likely filed in alongside them. The corporate cattle ranching of the open range, from decades earlier, would have already attracted a vast array of people over the rail lines looking for employment opportunities. The changes brought on by the range's closing was the creation of a more itinerant pool of "ranch hand" labor that likely moved around to a great degree within localized and regional economies. Further labor-intensive pursuits being taken on, on all three reservations, including the construction of irrigating causeways, sugar beet farming, and grain farming, would have required large pools of unskilled labor.²¹

²⁰ By 1925, the total stock holdings on the Nez Perce Reservation amounted to 99,308, a majority of which were cattle and horses. Similarly, stock holdings on the Flathead Reservation totaled about 390,000, and on the Blackfeet Reservation around 225,500. See, "Value of Indian Individual and Tribal Property," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1925* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1925), 52.

²¹ For an overview on the patterns of migrant labor among Hispanic and Latino communities, see, Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013). Also, Maria de los Angeles Barahona Israel, *The Lifeworld and Dwelling Experiences of Hispanic Migrant Workers: From Southern Michigan to Southern Texas* (Ann Arbor, MI:

Hispanic presence on the Northwest reservations is perhaps among the most overlooked of these communities' many cultural nuances, and it is not difficult to ascertain why. The presence of Latin Americans and Hispanic immigrants in Montana and Idaho, and on the reservations, has but a faint presence in the historical record. Hispanics were not often discussed in official records, kept either by the government or by the individual missions, save in law and order records. It seems to indicate that their presence was considered relatively unimportant, unless certain individuals found themselves at odds with the law and authorities. Nonetheless, Hispanic peoples appear to have made up a significant component of the allotted reservations' human geography, their presence on the reservations likely would have been widespread, as they filtered into and among the communities' common people and lower socioeconomic classes.²²

Even before the Dust Bowl, which in many ways expanded and diversified the ranks of migrant laborers, there existed a significant pattern of rural migration out of the Southwest, filtering north following patterns of harvests, roundups, plantings, and other activities that would have required a surplus of temporary workers. People filtered north through Colorado, Utah, and California, eventually making their way to the northwest

University of Michigan Press, 1990). Also, Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Culture, and Imperial Politics* (Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009). On the cattle industry, see Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 183-211, and 236-269).

²² Clues exist of a relatively wide Latino presence, such as the suspicion within the OIA of Latino migrants being responsible for the introduction of cannabis to the region, and mentions of migrant worker camps and rooming houses where "Mexicans" and other outsiders resided on the reservations. "OIA Case File 45978," September 28, 1932, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. Also, "Farming Extension, Narrative Report," March 1945, Browning Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 10, Folder Farmers - 1937, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield Colorado. Also, "OIA Case File 88712," September 5, 1922, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 8, Folder 88712, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, "Proceedings of Lapwai Agricultural Chapters," April 8, 1930, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 52154, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

before cycling back south. The makeup of these migratory communities themselves, would have been already quite diverse. Apart from Mexican Americans, who had lived within the bounds of the United States for multiple generations, there also would have been recent migrants, and a number of people from mixed ancestries, who likely could have and would have claimed some descent from Southwestern native groups. What is more, the seasonal migrations of laborers most certainly predated the opening of the reservations to allotment. Migrants from the Southwest had likely already been filing in and out of Western Montana and the Idaho panhandle even in the nineteenth century, allotment simply introduced this new community to the reservations.²³

A large part of the reason for the scarcity of Hispanic presence within the historical record can likely be attributed to the overall transience of their presence on the reservation. Hispanic migrants seemed to have been on the move quite frequently, and for the most part, their stays would never have been for very long, likely moving in during growing seasons, and, for the most part, departing shortly after the conclusion of harvests and roundups, as the reservations settled in, and started to hunker down during the winter time, at which point the majority of the migrant labor force on all three reservations was probably all-but-entirely relieved of employment on an annual basis. The wide presence of rooming houses and other sorts of temporary housing that could be turned over frequently and quickly in towns like Polson, Lapwai, and Browning, to say nothing of communities surrounding the reservations, like Missoula, Frenchtown, Kalispell, and Lewiston, supports the likelihood of an itinerant Hispanic community. Furthermore, Indian Service inspections of agricultural development on allotted lands indicates the presence of Hispanics and other

²³ Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 270-297.

migrants often living in camps on or near the lands where they were employed. In total, even the scant evidence seems to suggest the likelihood of a great number of Hispanic migrants living seasonally across all three reservations, probably congregating in towns where they looked for work and then living in camps at or near job sites.²⁴

Following patterns of Hispanic migrant labor that persist to this day, many of the laborers on the reservations were likely young, single, men who lived together in the camps and in the rooming houses, though undoubtedly women and even families were likely present as well. Some probably even became permanent fixtures of the reservations, meeting native spouses while living on the reservation and settling permanently. Instances such as the introduction of cannabis to the Flathead Reservation also suggest a significant degree of contact and exchange between the allottees of the reservations and the Hispanic migrants who moved through the region. Further evidence of exchange can be found in the northern proliferation of mundane things like the “Indian Taco,” a recipe originating from the Southwest, that came together as a mixture of Navajo, Mexican, and Latin American dietary cultures, and then followed the migrations of people from the Southwest, north.²⁵

Hispanic migrants, of course, did not constitute the entirety of newly introduced people to the reservations and to the regions. Migrations between reservations and from people with some degree of native heritage who did not previously live on reserved lands also constituted a large portion of the human movement onto the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfeet Reservations between the turn of the twentieth century and the 1930s.

²⁴ This pattern was traced by the investigation into cannabis trafficking on the Flathead Reservation, and likely bore a great deal of similarity to patterns found elsewhere throughout the region and on the other reservations. . . “OIA Case File 45978,” September 28, 1932, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

²⁵ . “OIA Case File 45978,” September 28, 1932, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 45978, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. Also, Lois Ellen Frank, *Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2013).

Intermarriage, and the mobility made possible by railroads, highways, and other new infrastructure helped to drive this process. Another segment of these migrating native peoples came in the form of propertyless and unallotted Indian individuals. The reasons for a native person to be without an allotment were numerous. Indians who had alienated or vacated their land, either because they had been unable to satisfy the payments of a forced fee patent, or been unable to reconvert their lands from fee to trust status were an exceedingly common sight during the allotment era. Furthermore, there existed hundreds of individuals who had lived on reservations and claimed native heritage - some even having one or more parents with recognized tribal status - who were themselves unrecognized, and thus ineligible for inclusion on tribal and allotment rolls.²⁶

Through an influx of people coming onto the opened reservations, “mix-blooded” Individuals became a wider and larger feature of the population. The nature of this group - or, rather, groups - of people is also exceedingly difficult to get at, in no small part because the Indian Service tended to generalize them together, and describe them as a lump sum. Characterizations of “mixed-bloods” given by the agencies and the agents tended to assign them reputations as “Progressive Indians,” meaning as whole they were more eager for and less resistant to agricultural training programs, more likely to develop their allotted properties - if they possessed them - and more generally predisposed to Christianity and a “civilized” mode of life, owing to the non-Indian components of their heritage and upbringing. While such broad strokes characterizations do not appear to have been totally

²⁶ Tribal enrollment records from the Blackfeet Reservation from between 1924 and 1937 reveal a wide occurrence of “mixed” families which were interspersed both with tribal enrollees and a wide array of non-Indians. “Enrollment, Tribal - 2/27/1924 to 7/20/1937,” July 20, 1937, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 16, Folder 063, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

inaccurate, they nonetheless downplayed and ignored the incredible diversity that existed within the three reservations mixed-ancestry communities themselves.²⁷

Large parts of the mixed-ancestry population stemmed back well into the nineteenth century, owing to the legacies of the fur trade, and additional migrations that continued to take place while the reservations were still only taking shape. Nineteenth-century migrations of French-Canadians and Métis into Western Montana, who then settled in Blackfoot and Flathead lands and became married into the groups formed the core of some of the oldest and most established mixed-ancestry families on the two reservations. Many of these migrants would have been young men, who ultimately intermarried with Salish, Kootenai, Kalispel, or Piegan women, owing to a wide prevalence of French-Canadian surnames in both groups early-twentieth century tribal rolls.²⁸

Many of these earliest migrants themselves carried with them some indigenous heritage from Canada or even from the Eastern United States, causing them to gravitate toward reservations rather than strictly non-Indian communities where they would have undoubtedly felt more like community outsiders, both racially and culturally. As settlement progressed on into further generations, patterns of intermarriage became increasingly more complex. Continued intermarriage with newcomers, combined with marriages and relations across multiple mixed-ancestry families, made the hereditary makeup of the reservations

²⁷ Through much of the twenties reports and statistics compiled on “mixed-bloods” fell into a generic set of generalizations. See, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1921* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1921). Also, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1922* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1922). Also, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1923* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1923). Also, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1924* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1924). Also, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1925* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1925). Also, *Annual Report for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1926* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1926).

²⁸ “Blackfoot Family Histories, 1908,” Records Group 75, Entry 24, Blackfoot Agency, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

exceedingly diverse, to the point by where even in the early-twentieth century many of the families and kin groups on all three reservations had become at least somewhat intermingled. The wide prevalence of intermarriage greatly complicated procedures for those who claimed Indian heritage but were seeking official tribal recognition through the 1920s and beyond. Claims required strict documentation, with the collection of affidavits and sworn testimony, certifying the claimed heritage of individuals.²⁹

For example, brothers Richard and Oliver Sanderville of the Blackfeet Reservation, who were 42 and 49 years old, respectively, in 1908, when they were placed on the Blackfeet Reservations' roll were themselves considered three-quarters Piegan. Their father, Isadore Sanderville had been half Piegan, as Richard and Oliver's paternal grandfather had been an early white settler to Blackfeet Country - likely arriving around the time that the Blackfeet Confederacy had entered into council with Isaac Stevens, and marrying a Piegan woman. Richard and Oliver's mother, a "full-blood," was given the Christian name - by either Catholic or Methodist missionaries - of Margaret Little Hawk. Her father, Red Bird Tail, and mother had died when she was very young - likely due to disease, leaving behind her and her brother, Big Lodge Pole.³⁰

Richard was ultimately married twice before 1908. His first wife was a fully Piegan woman given the Christian name of Eloise Bearlodge. The couple had a single child before they broke off their marriage, Agnes Sanderville, who was officially considered seven-

²⁹ For example, a registration drive undertaken in the mid-1930s in Montana to register hundreds of mixed-ancestry individuals who had no recognition as Indians, but had been living among the reservations of the Flatheads and Blackfeet for decades required painstaking work to track down whether they had sufficient Indian heritage for recognition, due to the complexities caused by intermarriage. See, "Pending Cases," Records Group 75, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Entry 616, Box 1, Folder 2, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁰ "Blackfeet Family Histories, 1908," Records Group 75, Entry 24, Blackfeet Agency, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

eighths Piegan, was nineteen years-old in 1908, and married to a white man named Harry Horn. Richard's second marriage, occurring some time near the turn of the twentieth century, was to a mixed-race woman named Nancy Sheppard. The second wife's father, Newton, came from an older intermarried and settler family. He was recognized as having a small but untraceable degree of native heritage. Newton's wife, Julia Sheppard was three quarters Piegan, born to a "full-blood" mother and a "half-breed" father. Officially, the Blackfeet tribal roll registered Nancy Shepard as a three-eighths heritage member of the reservation. The couple had two children, the first, Bridgette Sanderville, was born in 1900. They had a second child, Martha, born three years after the roll was taken in 1911, and both children were officially considered to be just over half-descent.³¹

Oliver Sanderville, on the other hand, married a fully Piegan woman, given the Christian name Mary. Mary's parents, Buffalo Horse and Sheep Woman, probably would have been staunch traditionalists who had rejected missionaries, as the enrollment records indicate that Mary officially converted to Christianity at the time of her marriage conducted by the Methodist agency chaplain in 1885. At the time that the tribal roll was taken in 1908, they had one surviving child, a son named Joseph who was twenty years-old, unmarried, and enrolled as seven-eighths Piegan.³²

Other enrollment records and cases further suggested a mobility and transplantation of a variety of different native heritages within the reservations. This process, obviously, had historical precedent, extending all the way back to the great cultural fluidity that had existed in the region prior to the bulk of white settlement, and it was a process that

³¹ "Blackfeet Family Histories, 1908," Records Group 75, Entry 24, Blackfeet Agency, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

³² "Blackfeet Family Histories, 1908," Records Group 75, Entry 24, Blackfeet Agency, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

continued onward. For example, Arlee, the first head chief of the Flatheads following their removal from the Bitterroot Valley to the Jocko Reservation in the mid-1870s, for whom the homestead site and sub-agency established just south of St. Ignatius was named, was referred to by Charlot as a “renegade Nez Perce.”³³ Though Charlot had certainly meant the label to undercut Arlee’s authority to act as Chief of the Flatheads, it also indicated an undoubted presence of comingling between closely historically related peoples. Less remotely, the prominent “mixed-blood” Michel Pablo had been an adopted member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation, after having spent time growing up at the Colville Agency in Washington, and being born to a Piegan mother.³⁴

Transplants were a common feature, widely interspersed with the more general population, and some of whom were even intermarried with the Nez Perce, Blackfeet, and Flathead Communities. Jack Ballantine, who was a resident of St. Ignatius, Montana through the twenties, and until he applied for recognition with Rocky Boy’s Reservation in 1937, was a “full-blooded” Cree, who had been born in Western Canada in 1889. He arrived to the Flathead Reservation in 1903, settling around the Catholic Mission, and eventually found work as a farm laborer, working for lessees and allottees, since he was ineligible for his own allotment on the reservation.³⁵ Frank Bellmore, who lived just down the highway in Arlee, Montana, settling there sometime between 1924 and 1925, had been born in Rocky Point, Montana, in 1880, and was of mixed-ancestry, claiming he possessed half-Chippewa descent. Like Ballantine, Bellmore had been drawn to the reservation by a

³³ “Chiefs of the Flatheads,” *Historic St. Mary’s Mission & Museum*, <http://www.saintmarysmmission.org/BitterrootSalish-Chiefs.html>.

³⁴ “*United States v. Heyfron*,” in *Digest of Decisions of United States Courts*, Vol. 9 (Westlaw Publishing Company, 1914), 964-966. Also, Chalk Courchane, “Michel Pablo, A Composite History,” *Oregon-California Trails Association*, <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/bios/MichelPablo.pdf>.

³⁵ “File 72 - Jack Ballantine,” Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 5, Folder 72, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

combination of wage and farm labor opportunities, along with the safety and familiarity offered by living with other Native People. He was married to another migrant, Anna Bellmore, who had half Cree and Blackfeet descent, and had been born at St. Peter's Mission in 1898.³⁶

Charles Flammand became a resident of the Blackfeet Reservation, settling in the small town site of Babb, in 1911, near the point of the reservations' allotment, and eventually found work as a laborer and ranch hand, residing on the reservation through the 1920s and into the 30s. He was born in 1883, in Saskatchewan, and claimed to be one-half Cree-Chippewa. His wife, Annie Flammand - maiden name Annie McGillis - had been born on the Flathead Reservation in 1897, but her family relocated to the Blackfeet Reservation in 1899. She was eventually enrolled at the Holy Family Mission School, and counted as being of three-fourths native descent. She likely met and married Charles in 1919. Charles' father, Louis Flammand, who was three-quarters Cree-Chippewa immigrated to the Blackfeet Reservation along with him, and died in Browning in 1920, being interred at Holy Family's graveyard.³⁷ The Gray family arrived to Babb three years after the Flammands. They had resided just off the Blackfeet Reservation, in Choteau, Montana, and possessed a mixture of Cree-Chippewa and probably Piegan descent. Bill Gray claimed three-quarters native heritage, and shortly after arriving on the reservation he

³⁶ "File 90 - Anna Bellmore," Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 5, Folder 90, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, "File 91 - Frank Bellmore," Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 5, Folder 91, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁷ "File 225 - Annie Flammand," Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 6, Folder 225, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, "File 226 - Charles Flammand," Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 6, Folder 225, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

found work as a sheep herder. His wife, Mary Stork, claimed one-half descent, though the location and circumstances of her birth were entirely unknown. The two had a son, Robert Gray, in 1914, who they claimed as being five-eighths Cree-Chippewa. In 1922, Robert was given the right to be enrolled at the agency day school in Babb, and in 1925, they boarded Robert at the Jesuit school at Holy Family Mission. Robert left school altogether in 1927, at the age of 13, and became a farm and ranch laborer, working on allotments and farms from Babb to the Two Medicine Creek District.³⁸

While frictions between migrants, “mixed bloods,” and “full bloods” always threatened to emerge, for the most part, intermarriage was such a widespread reality that they were regarded as adoptive members of an emerging modern tribal identity. Inkings of an imperfect cultural and social cohesion come through in late teens and 1920s. Among the earliest regional examples of self-conscious diversity emerged from the Nez Perce Reservation in 1919, regarding a petition to extend the trust period on allotments and protect them from the forced issue of fee-patents.

We the Nez Perce Indian Allottees adopted all the half breed or mixed blood [sic] that were allotted then at the time of the allotting [sic] the Nez Perce Reservation and they become members of the Nez Perce tribe and sharing in the allotment of the land on the Nez Perce reservation in severalty, they were adopted by the tribe in accordance with its customs... We believe where an Indian or mixed blood desires to receive patent in fee at his or her request for all of his or her allotment's [sic] or for their inherited lands be patented if competent. But if the Indian or the mixed blood do not wish to receive the patent then he or she should not be given the patent but their land should be held in trust by the U.S. Government.³⁹

³⁸ “File 268 - Robert Gray,” Records Group 75, Entry 616, Other Enrollment Records, Applications and Other Records Relating to Registrations under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Box 7, Folder 268, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁹ “The General Council Held at Lapwai, Nez Perce County, Idaho,” June 5, 1919, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 116, Folder 54830-19, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Similarly, on the Flathead and Blackfoot Reservations, people of mixed ancestry were fully part of the cultural and social fabric of the reservation. With some of the families of mixed ancestry being so well-established by the twentieth century that their place in the community's business and in its political milieu was - more often than not- taken for granted as a given fact.⁴⁰

This is not to say, however, that frictions and factionalism did not exist, as both most certainly did, on all three reservations. The realities of intra-tribal politics on the three reservations in the 1920s, however, was that divisive issues seemed to cut across the demographics of "full-bloods" and "mixed-bloods," rather than necessarily along those lines. Among the most heated debates that took place, most often concerned how tribal resources were to be distributed, and how the income derived from tribal resources was to be divided. Here, people of all walks, and of a variety of hereditary backgrounds were to be found on both sides of the issues. Far more divisive than issues of ethnicity, appeared to be matters of culture, particularly between factions of "traditionalists" and "acculturators," and even Christians and non-Christians. Cultural and religious infighting became venomous and stubborn at times, but often lacked any apparent ethnic motivation. For example, preparation for Lapwai's Fourth of July Celebration in 1924 broke down entirely, five years after the tribe had declared an ethnic unity of interest in the protection of their allotments, when groups of "traditional spiritualists" and Christian Nez Perces refused to celebrate in one another's presence, which they found mutually offensive.⁴¹

⁴⁰ "Enrollment, Tribal - 2/27/1924 to 7/20/1937," July 20, 1937, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 16, Folder 063, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, "Enrollment, Citizenship, Degree of Indian Blood," April 27, 1945, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 24, Folder 063, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

⁴¹ Letter: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 11, 1924, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder 29045-24, National Archives and

Taken at face value, government officials' complaints and "hair-pulling" over "Indian factionalism" through the 1920s and into the 1930s paints a picture of the agency communities as deeply dysfunctional. Alternatively, however, they were likely witnessing the unfolding of a modern rendition of extremely old social processes. For one, the absorption of newcomers was a long-standing trend for Native Peoples in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, who by the second decade of the twentieth-century had been receiving a steady stream of migrants for over a century. Perhaps setting apart the most modern of these migrations was that the communities on the reservations were, themselves, undergoing massive collective changes. By the second decade of the twentieth century the Nez Perces, Blackfeet, and Confederated Salish and Kootenais were emerging as more tight-knit "tribes" and indigenous "nations" than they had ever been at any previous point in their histories. Politically and collectively they were beginning to think and act as "nations" and "tribes" where once had existed a far more ephemeral array of kin groups and culture groups. This was perhaps the greatest irony of the allotment era on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, rather than wiping away tribalism it saw instead a coalescing ethnogenesis and new tribal consciousness.⁴²

Yet, nations and peoples are never constructed without growing pains.

Factionalism, though it had probably always been a feature of the fluid politics practiced by indigenous kin groups far before the reservation period, was as likely related to the cultural and social developments taking place within modern Indian Country. The forming tribal

Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, Letter: Oscar H. Lipps to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 18, 1924, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 4, Folder 29045-24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁴² Frequent government complaints over native factionalism contrasted to the fact that through business councils and other forms of authority, the confederated tribes were beginning to manage their affairs in ways that had never previously been used. "Tribal Relations - 2/25/1915 to 12/11/1934," December 11, 1934, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

nations were, above all else, ambiguous entities, containing a myriad of different social, cultural, spiritual, and ethnic threads. Settling the terms on which the new constituents of Indian Country would coexist with one another presented as daunting of a task as determining the coexistence of Indian Country and the wider United States.

Institutions of Integration

That the reservations, and particularly the settlements and towns, were places where people of widely disparate pasts commingled is a given. Certain institutions in particular, however, actively placed individuals in close quarters with one another, most specifically the schools and missions. The reality of integration became, in no small way, a historical paradox. Ultimately, the reservations - and the entire Indian Service, for that matter - had been designed from a general confusion about the place of Native Peoples within the broader scope of the American Nation. The intent of removal had been to place Indian peoples outside what the federal government, state governments, and policy makers considered to be the normative bounds of American life. When the acquisition of the Mexican Cession, the discovery of gold in the West, chartering of the transcontinental railroads, and other forces that drove westward movement rendered the goals of removal impossible, the government institutionally adapted to the maintenance of a continued isolation of Indian Country.⁴³ Even as the “Friends of the Indian” and other reformers

⁴³ Fr. Francis Paul Prucha conceptualized the history and development of the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a nearly unconscious path taken by the United States Government to create separate institutions that would govern Native Peoples apart from the remainder of the United States and its settled population. The reform that commenced with the Dawes Act then - in a scattered fashion - attempted to correct this path, but found it all but irreconcilable. See, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), xxvii-xxix. In assessing the ultimate impact of the railroads on westward settlement, Historian Richard White argues that they quickly broke down any possibility of smooth transition for Native Peoples in moving from life as they had known it to life surrounded by settlers. Furthermore, Historian William Cronon saw the West rapidly move from a settlement and Indian frontier to an interlocked and industrial economic system. See, Richard White,

moved to alter this historical, institutional separation of Native Peoples and the rest of the American nation, the intent was to bring the “tribal mass” into the mainstream of American life. No consideration was ever given that, perhaps, American life might be pulled into the orbit of Indian Country. Unanticipated consequences, however, instead moved to synthesize “Indian” and “American” lifeways, and alter the geography - human, natural, and political - of Indian Country rather than to banish it. While the material impact placed on Indian Country by assimilation can be traced and evaluated, that groups of people who were once perfectly capable of supporting themselves were being driven into desperate poverty by programs that were - ironically - designed to promote self-sufficiency is an unavoidable fact. Demarcating, however, where one culture and history stopped, and where another began is a far more difficult and ultimately impossible task. “Tribal lifeways” were not so much being stamped out as going through radical, deeply disruptive, and even painful changes. The simple fact of the matter is that the once-self-sustaining groups of native people that existed prior to the reservations and the people who lived under allotment were all at once deeply connected and yet completely different.⁴⁴

Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012). Also, William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).

⁴⁴ This is perhaps among the most difficult historiographical debates in American Indian History. While assimilationist policies were most certainly assaulting the many pillars of many different forms of native life, to what extent - if at all - were various “Indian” cultural institutions fading away? Furthermore, as argued by historians like Gregory Smoak, the reservations were, in and of themselves, becoming seed beds of historically “new” Indian cultural inventions that syncretized older cultural forms with new ideas and aesthetics to a level of complexity that become difficult, if not impossible, to pull apart from one another. This even comes around to debates concerning Indian and cultural genocide. Were older cultural forms dying out, to be replaced by new ones, or was cultural development within the context of the reservations the product of social evolution? Beyond that are social evolution and cultural genocide truly distinct from one another? See, Gregory Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008). Also, Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004). Also, Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Assault on Indian Tribalism: The General Allotment Law (Dawes Act of 1887)* (Malabar, FL: Kreiger Publishing Company, 1986).

Integration should not, however, be confused with equality. Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations were multi-ethnic communities that existed within an uneven power structure that prized “whiteness.”⁴⁵ The same structures that were diversifying Indian Country in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle - the schools, the missions, the leasing system, and the checker boarding of reservation property - were at the same time decidedly “instructional” institutions. All fundamentally sprung forth from an ideology that prized certain systems of knowledge - agriculture, private land ownership, the English language, Western European education, and Christian faith - over others - diversified and semi-mobile subsistence, native land use strategies, native languages, “tribal” knowledge, and native spiritual patterns. Thus the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations became multicultural and multi-ethnic communities that disproportionately favored material success upon those who best adapted to the rules laid down by the dominant, white, American culture, its laws, and its institutions.

Even the missions, which were by far the organization most inclined toward bridging cultural gaps, and that were - at best - somewhat misfit members of the reservation’s power structure, indulged cross-cultural curiosity without embracing cultural relativism. Catholics did indeed embrace native interpretations of their faith, within a scope of limits, so long as that interpretation came along “acceptable” and recognizable lines. Anything outside that scope, however, quickly came to be discarded as “pagan.” The

⁴⁵ Here too, the constitution and construction of “whiteness” can be strongly debated. In large part, this is the case because for certain people who were of mixed-ancestry, even though Euroamericans would have never in any social or cultural sense considered them “white,” they could nonetheless gain access to resources and privilege because of their “culturally white” knowledge of American Law, property management, and more. Even beyond this “white” as a signifier and racial identity always has been and continues to be a malleable and evolving category that, over time, has absorbed ethnicities once considered “non-white.” See, William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989). Also, Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2011).

agencies too, accepted a certain level of “tribal spin” on their intentions. As an example the wide prevalence of leasing on the Nez Perce Reservation, born as an adaptation to allotment, was something that left the superintendents of Lapwai Agency nonplused but accepting, even if it was only because they had no true power to stop it. Nonetheless, both institutions had created a “game” with certain rules, and they preferred that everyone play along, and gave preferential treatment to those who did.

Regardless, the changing landscape of Indian Country was simultaneously altering the institutions that shaped and managed it, both consciously and unconsciously. For the missions in particular, what set them apart from the agencies - aside from the fact that they did not actually possess the power to “set the rules” in the same fashion as the Indian Service - was that they were actively, if not equally, embracing plurality, rather than simply adapting to it. Economic assimilation, secular cultural assimilation, even the notion of “Americanization,” while all explicit goals of the Indian bureaucracy were concepts that remained relatively meaningless to the missions. Religious instruction most certainly contained its intersections with the broader scope of Indian acculturation, but nonetheless remained distinct because, ultimately, and at an institutional level, issues of confession and morality mattered to the missions, issues of culture, race, and ethnicity for the most part did not.

Thus, the missions emerged as the leading integrators due to the institutional ideology of the Catholic Church and the belief in a “universal faith.” Of course, this church-wide ideology remained always subject to change when placed in the hands of individual actors who processed it through the lenses of their own biases, prejudices, and experiences. Yet, despite missionaries’ individual complexities, the impact of a theology

that - theoretically - looked past matters of race and culture to emphasize a human togetherness in universal baptism and salvation from sin shaped the missions as places where all would be welcomed with their doors, even if all would not receive equal treatment.

Perhaps the most integrated of the missions, by the 1920s, was St. Joseph's, which for all intents and purposes had become as much a mission for the non-Indian settlers of the Nez Perce Reservation as it was for Native Peoples of Slickpoo. White support for the mission, and even white enrollment in the Jesuits' boarding school effectively kept the mission's doors open, and particularly that of St. Joseph's boarding school. While it was financially frail, St. Joseph's remained indispensably important to the reservation's educational infrastructure, causing the agency to help it along in times of great duress. Once the Nez Perce Boarding School near Lapwai went bankrupt, and was subsequently closed by the agency in 1911, St. Joseph's stood as the only remaining boarding school on the entirety of the reservation.⁴⁶

While the history of the industrial boarding school system conjures ideas of harrowing experiences at far away institutions of imperialism, on the large reservations of the Northwest, they also provided the only educational access to people who lived in remote corners of rural Idaho and Montana, where day schools provided by the agencies and the sub-agencies, or public schools were simply not an option due to extremes of distance. At its height, the St. Joseph's school boarded up to 144 rural children, though year to year enrollments tended to fluctuate quite dramatically, and an overall demographic shrinkage of school age children on the reservation decreased enrollments. Upon inspection

⁴⁶ "St. Joseph's Mission," Undated, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 136, Folder 20, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

in 1923, for example, St. Joseph's enrolled 92 total students, out of which 53 were considered Nez Perce and 39 were either white, or otherwise non-Nez Perce. Regardless of their ethnic statuses, however, the children boarded at St. Joseph's - as a rule - came from impoverished rural backgrounds, and lacked most of the basic necessities. Disease, lack of cold-weather clothing, the need for shoes, and other basics, which had to be acquired through charities, were needs that spread across school population.⁴⁷

More generally, across the Nez Perce Reservation, by the mid-1920s, the school age population had largely been moved out beyond the separate Indian School system. Of the 392 school-age boys and girls among the enrolled members of the Nez Perce tribe in 1925, 224 were placed into local public schools, where they were placed right alongside the non-Indian residents of the school district. Twenty-one students had been boarded off the reservation at various industrial schools and boarding schools, and an additional 33 students, most of whom were Catholic but diagnosed with various illness, were simultaneously cared for and schooled at the Lapwai Sanatorium, with the remainder of the school age population boarded at St. Joseph's or attending the mission as a day school. Thus the more general reality was that a majority of the Nez Perces were spending their developmental years in mixed company, with only a small minority placed into the setting of the nationwide boarding system.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ St. Joseph's Mission," Undated, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 136, Folder 20, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Also, Charles F. Peirce, Supervisor of Indian Schools, "Report on Schools and Sanatorium at the Nez Perce Reservation, Idaho," January 24, 1925, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Box 9, Folder 8982-25, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ Charles F. Peirce, Supervisor of Indian Schools, "Report on Schools and Sanatorium at the Nez Perce Reservation, Idaho," January 24, 1925, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Box 9, Folder 8982-25, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, Samuel A. Eliot, to the Board of Indian Commissioners, September 20, 1926, Chicago, Illinois, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 9, Folder 8982-25, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

By way of comparison, in 1925, the Blackfeet Reservation contained a population of 966 individuals who were deemed school eligible. Of that number, 78 were boarded off of the reservation in various schools, another 263 were reported as in regular attendance of one of the day schools run by the sub-agencies out of Browning, Heart Butte, Babb, and East Glacier. Additionally, 93 students were permanently boarded at Holy Family, alongside non-Indian orphans placed in the missions' charge by the Diocese of Helena, and an untracked and irregular attendance of both Indian and non-Indian day school charges. Meanwhile, 411 school age Blackfeet were reported in regular attendance of local public schools around Browning and Cut Bank, where they were enrolled alongside non-Indian residents. On the Flathead Reservation in 1925, there were 685 school-eligible enrollees. From among these, 104 were boarded at the Agency School still maintained at Jocko, and none were boarded off of the reservation. St. Ignatius held 155 boarded students from among the enrollees along with an additional day school population hailing from the areas surrounding the mission, and 294 students were reported to be in regular attendance of the public schools maintained at Ronan and Polson.⁴⁹

As the former Indian School systems on the three reservations continued to deteriorate, integration expanded. By 1930, of the 919 students on the Blackfeet Reservation who were confirmed as either boarded or in regular attendance of school, 666 of them were placed in settings where Indians and non-Indians were co-educated. Of the 253 enrolled in the remaining Indian Service schools, 145 of them were still boarded on the reservation. Flathead Agency reported a total of 835 eligible enrollees in regular attendance, out of which 744 were in integrated schools, either the mission or the public

⁴⁹ "Indian and School Population," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1925* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1925), 40-44.

schools, and with the Jocko School closed the 91 other students were boarded off reservation. Finally, Lapwai Agency reported 323 eligible students regularly enrolled, out of which all but 44 were placed into schools where they were co-educated with non-Indians.⁵⁰

The realities of integration run against the grain of common perceptions about early- twentieth century American Indian education. The tragedies of the boarding school experience, where native children were torn from their familiar context and institutionally stripped of their heritage remained prevalent into the 1940s, but were not the only experience, and in the Northwest, not even necessarily a majority experience. Indian educational experiences, instead, existed on a spectrum. The large and infamous boarding and industrial schools comprised but a fraction of the diverse totality of the American Indian education infrastructure, that included day schools, privately-run denominational schools, and even utilization of state public schools. Hundreds, even thousands, of native children through the early decades of the twentieth century attended school alongside the diverse array of peoples they lived with. Mistreatment and misery existed everywhere through the educational system, but coexisted simultaneously with a completely opposite set of experiences. Apart from the various curriculums and intentions of the different schools many children from the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations were being immersed into a world that the generations of even their grandparents likely could not have anticipated.

While the schools presented perhaps the most quantifiable example of integration, the shared public spaces of Indian Country - out of which the missions and the parishes

⁵⁰ "Indian School Population," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1930* (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1930), 51-55.

were an integral part - were simultaneously diversifying as well. While it is difficult and even impossible to track mass attendance through the 20s demographically, the diverse natures of the towns and the missions suggests a reflective pattern in church-going. “Mixed-bloods,” and other migrants with some level of Catholic background and identity often gravitated to the missions, or to communities like Babb or Polson that already possessed extant mixed-ancestry and Catholic communities. Catholics from amongst the migrant laborer populations were also probably at least transient features of these parish communities, and whites from communities like Polson and Browning were most certainly in membership of the churches at sites like Cul de Sac, Browning, and Polson, alongside native Catholics.

The growth and development of the dioceses of Boise and Helena, in and of themselves as well, represented a wider integration of the Catholic Church and its infrastructure in the region. For all intents and purposes, native converts in Idaho and in Western Montana constituted the region’s original Catholic population, the rest of the community, and the non-Indian components of both dioceses grew and developed around the missions. By the 1930s the Catholic communities on the three reservations were fully-recognized members of a broader regional Catholic community. Still too, the networks of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions connected the reservation communities to a nationwide system. Increasingly too, native Catholics were beginning to recognize their belonging to a religious community that extended well beyond the boundaries of the missions and transcended beyond lines of race, ethnicity, and culture.⁵¹

Accompanying the *de facto* integration occurring on the reservations eventually came an increased effort to legally integrate Native Peoples and native property with the

⁵¹ Christopher Vecsey, *The Paths of Kateri’s Kin* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

states and the jurisdictions that surrounded them. While this had been the overarching and long term goal of the Dawes Act, allotment's implementation, along with the amendments made to it by the Curtis and Burke Acts had truly only complicated the situation. By the early 1920s Indians' legal statuses within the United States stood spread out in a confusing and chaotic array. Some had gained citizenship through marriage to whites and "naturalization," insofar as they renounced their ties and claims to tribal rights, or in exchange for a period of military service during the First World War. Still, a larger swath had technically been made citizens by their receipt of an allotment, but a combination of state laws and the complications introduced by fee-patenting restricted effective citizenship. In Idaho and Montana, the only practical way for members of the Blackfeet, Nez Perces, or Confederated Salish and Kootenais to wield their citizenship was to have been allotted and have successfully converted their property into fee lands, upon which they paid taxes.⁵²

In response to this, the Senate and House passed a general citizenship act, signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge on June 2, 1924. To be clear, however, the act emanated not from any sort of organized call within the various reservations and Indian communities clamoring for citizenship, but rather emerged as an administrative solution to the complex nature of Indian citizenship during the first three decades of general allotment. Previous paths to citizenship made available, and that the government even enticed Native Peoples to follow, were proving to have inconsistent results. Furthermore, beyond the path of being allotted, Indians were largely denied access to gaining citizenship through the

⁵² See, Deborah A. Rosen, *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Also, Paul Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Also, through it pertains to the Lakota, it still serves as a good model on the complexities of the question of American Indian citizenship, see, Edward C. Valandra, "U.S. Citizenship: The American Policy to Extinguish the Principle of Lakota Political Consent," *Wicazo Sa Review* 8 (1992), 24-29.

normal means afforded to immigrants, even though the legal path to citizenship for immigrants was certainly far from simple and rational itself. Movement toward the act, however, also received a surge from a growing bipartisan feeling among Western Senators and House Representatives that Native Peoples had proven and earned their right to citizenship, particularly due to the fact that Native Peoples had disproportionately volunteered to serve in the First World War.⁵³

To say, however, that the passage of the Citizenship Act radically changed many common people's lives would be somewhat misleading. A guaranteed federal recognition of citizenship only went so far when matters fell to how Native Peoples' effective citizenship would be received on a local level. Overall, the Citizenship Act did very little if anything to change the uneven power structure on the reservations. This was particularly true for the members of the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, since all of them were, technically, already citizens made effective by each tribe's allotment.

Issues of voting rights among the Nez Percés, raised shortly following the passage of the Citizenship Act, perfectly demonstrated the limits of legal integration. While citizenship provided rights to suffrage protected under the 15th Amendment, which could not be abridged on account of race, the state of Idaho, nonetheless, argued that suffrage rights were conferred not by congress but by the individual states, and that it remained the sole province of the state to confer suffrage. A memo, collected by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke, from the Secretary of the State of Idaho, indicated the state was ill-inclined to grant the Nez Percés, or any of the other Idaho tribes for that matter, suffrage in general elections:

⁵³ See, Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). Also, Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

The Constitution of the State of Idaho provides as follows with regard to Indians, 'nor shall Indians not taxed, who have not severed their tribal relations and adopted the habits of civilization, either vote, serve as jurors or hold any civil office.'⁵⁴

The vague wording of the state Constitution, which more or less mimicked the wording of the Dawes Act's citizenship clause, essentially empowered Idaho to deny suffrage to almost any recognized member of the Nez Perces, and certainly if an individual in question still had his or her lands protected under trusts. Commenting on the state of the relationship between the Nez Perces and Idaho, Agent Lipps commented, "like the Israelites of old we are wandering in the wilderness and we would welcome a Moses to lead us out."⁵⁵

Rethinking "Indianness"

The "conventional," bureaucratic mode by which the Department of the Interior regarded Indianness, of course, had to change to reflect the reality of Indian Country. In reality, prior to the late-nineteenth century, the Indian Service and the federal government had never really devised a comprehensive or systematic definition of who its "Indian wards" were. Rather, tribal peoples were defined relationally, rather than strictly racially. Most specifically, this meant they were defined by their extralegal allegiances that existed beyond or outside the authority of the United States, to chiefs, bands, kin groups, and "tribes." Individuals who recognized themselves as "Indian" and were mutually recognized by a formal "Indian nation" as a member with rights, were, therefore, Indian. Under these

⁵⁴ Letter: Senator Arthur Capper to Charles H. Burke, October 13, 1925, Topeka, Kansas, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 75923-24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ Memorandum: Oscar H. Lipps to Charles H. Burke, December 13, 1924, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 75923-24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

earliest definitions - at least in theory - the hereditary “racial” makeup of any given individual mattered not at all.⁵⁶

Allotment, however, forced a reconsideration of how Indianness was to be defined. At its most basic level, however, allotment as a program was far more concerned with matters of lifestyle than any “racial” status, since - philosophically - the legislation sought to settle and civilize people who still lived a “tribal” life style - defined as including some or all of the elements of itinerance, subsistence hunting, and native spirituality. Since allotment was designed as a system that provided material benefits, though, some form of barrier needed to be put in place to limit the numbers of people who could claim and receive land allotments. As the tribal agencies expanded, furthermore, to include educational and health services, these programs similarly required a limitation on potential recipients to reduce the strain on minimal resources and monies. The answer that eventually arose as a solution to both of these bureaucratic problems was the implementation of “blood quantum,” a definitive degree of “Indian blood” to prove membership.

The use of blood quantum, of course has a vast history of its own. Like almost anything else ever devised by the Indian Service, blood quantum were never suddenly and universally put into place, rather it coalesced from a diverse array of ersatz practices that were almost as old as the reservation and treaty systems themselves. Blood quantum first emerged at the level of individual agencies, used as a base of “provable” Indian heritage required for adoption or recognition within a tribal group and inclusion on the group’s roll. By the eve of the Indian New Deal, however, the practice had expanded into a national

⁵⁶ Deborah A. Rosen, *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship, 1790-1880* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

standard of one-quarter Indian blood required for recognition as an American Indian. The practice further bureaucratized the verification of individual's racial status. Claimants needed to have affidavits and other records from enrolled and recognized tribal members to verify the truths of their alleged descent. Along with verifying their "Indianness," claimants also needed to prove the individual tribal origins of their descent along with linguistic capabilities.⁵⁷

"Blood Quantums," of course, replaced far older, and far more fluid mechanics of belonging that for centuries had been carried out through informal means and relationships, along with ritualized systems of socialization and kinship centered on individuals' function and acceptance within a community network, rather than any outward or hereditary racial identity. This fluidity had been both necessitated and reinforced by the dynamism and constant evolution of the world that Native Peoples lived in, even prior to their increasing contact with outsiders who arrived from beyond the bounds of Indian Country. Identity and belonging, in the deep history of the North American continent, were inseparable from politics, economy, and diplomacy. All of this sprung from common and widespread indigenous perceptions of their place in the world, which often, though not always, dichotomously divided up people into "kin" and "others." Dealing with outsiders in Indian Country had, for centuries, required bringing them into a circle of familiarity, which was carried out and ritualized through exchanges, intermarriage, adoption, and myriad other social inventions. Thus, in essence, no one in Indian Country was assigned a static identity,

⁵⁷ As a case study of the adaptation to blood quantums, Jill Doerfler's study strongly argues that "blood standards" went a long way to developing indigenous racial conceptions of self and community. See, Jill Doerfler, *Those Who Belong: Identity, Family, Blood, and Citizenship among the White Earth Anishinaabeg* (Easting Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015).

racial or otherwise. Rather, people could carry multiple identities and change their identities and statuses with near constancy.⁵⁸

Such fluidity was, moreover, the product of cultures that, prior to the reservation period (and even into it) placed no weight or meaning into concepts of the nation, or the state. Rather their world was organized loosely and according to the way they related to it, organized into levels of family, kin, band or clan, and then into concepts of “cultural relatives,” allies, outsiders, and aliens. Little if any effort, furthermore, was put into outwardly classifying people into these dynamic and impermanent categories. Instead, people moved between them. Stepping back to the dawn of the reservation era for example, the Flatheads, the Blackfeet, and the Nez Perces were categories and groups of people that did not actually exist, for their members anyhow, in any permanent way. They had negotiated their treaties as loose confederations of disparate people, all hailing from their own small-scale cultural and familial worlds. This was the same sense in which they first settled their reservations - both through choice and through force.

As such, notions of Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nations arose alongside the concept of “Blood Quantum,” because concepts of “tribe” and “nation” required an ethnic and racial framework in order to exist. In essence, the peoples occupying the three reservations only became “Indian nations” when they started to operate

⁵⁸ Native Peoples dichotomous senses of self, furthermore, prevented any sort of true and meaningful sense of Pan-Indianness, and that Indians, as a whole, shared more in common with one another than with outsiders before the twentieth century. Indigenous cultures saw themselves living in a world where all of their myriad groups were entirely distinct from one another. Such a notion never could have arisen in cultures that lacked any firm “racial” grasp of humanity, and instead saw difference through culture, spirituality, language, custom, and other malleable categories. The possibility of a united “Indian voice” emerged simultaneous to the racial framework necessary to establish it, in the modern period. See, David H. Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Also, Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Also, Vine Deloria, Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Books, 1995). Also, Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

and think of the themselves as such, which was not at all present when Isaac Stevens travelled through Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Countries in 1855. Even then, this development was sedimentary and uneven in its development. Remnants of the older ways of belonging and identity constructions persisted on, throughout the entire timeframe of this study and beyond it. On the Flathead Reservation, the three major linguistic-cultural groupings - the Flatheads, the Kalispels, and the Kootenais - maintained their own chiefs. And, even though the Flatheads and Kalispels came to be closely networked together, by virtue of marriage, economics, and a shared and widespread Catholic and Christian identity, the Kootenais remained relatively culturally distinct, and more predisposed to resist outside influences, and distrust the motivations of missionaries and moralizers. On the Nez Perce Reservation, the legacy of the Nez Perce War maintained a wedge sundering the “treaty” and “non-treaty” groups. Furthermore, distinctions continued on between the Presbyterian “mission” bands and the Catholic Slickpoo band. The Blackfeet, finally, stood sundered from many members of their former confederacy, as the reservation in Montana consisted primarily of Piegans, with other groups being reserved, eventually, in Canada.

“Blood Quantum,” in a certain sense, arose as an adaptation to new developments, and a way to synthesize older identity constructions with newly forming and arriving people, including migrants, adoptees, and “mixed-bloods,” into a broader notion of community. More than simply serving as a bureaucratic barrier to entitlements, the confederated nations themselves adopted blood quantum as a barrier to belonging. While previous constructions of kinship and familiarity had once been fluid, that does not mean they had ever been automatic. Native groups had always shunned certain outsiders and unwanted peoples, and continued to do so, a bureaucratized system of racial certification -

in some sense - took the place of older forms of ritual and acceptance. The Flatheads, Blackfeet, and Nez Perces were developing racial and ethnic senses of themselves at the same time that the Indian Service was implementing a rigorous racial and ethnic definition of them.

These trends resulted in a bifurcation of identity. On an informal level, Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot Countries remained as fluid as they had ever been. They continued to receive outsiders and outside influences, and meld them into a syncretization of culture and mixing of ethnic identity. Newcomers continued to be socialized into the fabric of Indian Country, and became inseparable from the wider world and culture in which Flatheads, Nez Perces, and Blackfeet resided. As the composition of their communities continued to meld and evolve, so did cultural practices, attitudes and ideas. In no way, shape, or form, did the acculturation drive of the Dawes Act and the progressive reforms in Indian Policy put a stop to this. In an important and real sense, Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce communities remained unchanged by the rigors of allotment, in that they continued on a centuries-long course of adaptation and development.

Simultaneously, however, real and full tribal membership was solidifying around a set of not absolute, but quantifiable and traceable traits. Even as the reservations received new migrants and new ideas not all would or could be fully absorbed into the "tribe." The irony, and perhaps even the tragedy, of the early twentieth century was that at a time that indigenous peoples were being physically integrated into the United States to a previously unmatched degree, they were simultaneously becoming further separated from people they shared and had shared Indian Country with. The early twentieth century saw the reservations removed from their context of isolation, connected to surrounding economies

and cultures by a vast expanse of infrastructure starting with the railroads. The boundaries of reservation life became more porous, and less distinct from the boundaries of counties, states, and other conventions that organized mainstream American life. The early twentieth century, however, also witnessed “Indianness” become a finite and legal construction, applied to only certain people. And the boundaries of this new, legal “Indianness” circumvented much of the porousness and fluidity that “Indianness” had once entailed.

Chapter VI

An Illness at Its Heart: Allotment and the Problem of Poverty

Poverty stood at the foundation of the conflicts and civic dysfunction that tore at the fabric of Western Montana and Northern Idaho's reservation communities. It was a fact too empirical and obvious for the Office of Indian Affairs to miss. The full causes and consequences of pervasive poverty, however, and particularly poverty's relationship to the policy of allotment, largely eluded the institutions tracking and measuring "civilizational progress" in Indian Country, at least until the late 1920s. For most of its operation allotment went largely unevaluated in terms of the real economic and human consequences it unleashed on Indian Reservations and across the United States. Instead, the OIA remained wholly focused on the numbers of allotments being distributed and patents in fee issued. The OIA obsessed over infrastructure - fencing, roads, irrigation, surveys - but spent very little time, energy, or consideration on ends and qualitative results.¹

The short-sighted problems of allotment, from its very inception, have been thoroughly covered and debated in historical literature. In few cases did the program set up Indians enrolled in it to succeed, due to a lack of resources and funding. Varying agricultural quality of tribal lands both across reservations and within the reservations themselves was insufficiently taken into consideration. In fact, after the initial surveys produced at the beginning of the allotment process the issue was never again brought up until the Meriam Report of 1928. For example, the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfeet

¹ Typical reports filed with the Indian Service included both statistics and narrative reports that largely covered sanitary conditions in government facilities, along with reports on infrastructural work accomplished during the fiscal year. "Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1927," Undated, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 9, Folder 052 Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1927, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, Colorado.

Reservations all ranged from high-quality, desirable farming and grazing land along the creek and river drainages - land that was, incidentally, as likely to end up in the public domain and in the hands of non-Indian homesteaders as it was to fall in the hands of allottees - to forest lands more suitable to logging than agriculture, to rocky mountain foothills of dubious agrarian value, and heavily sloped mountain sides that defied most any form of development. Beyond that, it seemed relatively ludicrous, on the part of the Department of the Interior, to expect tribal economic independence to arise by tossing allottees into the highly volatile agricultural marketplace. At the same time that the federal government was making way to introduce thousands more individuals into the supply-side of the farming and ranching market, crushing debt, soaring transportation fees, and diminishing profits were driving American farmers across the Great Plains, the Midwest, and the American South into populist political revolt. Even as the market improved and reached its peak during World War I, agriculture remained a risky business proposition, flooded with an overabundance of production and labor and built on a debt-driven house of cards. Allottees found themselves at an even greater disadvantage, considering they did not even fully-own their property unless they gained an acknowledgement of their competence from the Dawes Commission and received the patent in fee for their allotment, which could be a difficult and circuitous process.²

² Poor land quality, low levels of resources, and a generally poor agricultural economy were all among the top reasons cited in the Meriam Report for the general, nationwide failure of allotment and the Dawes Act to actually provide some modicum of economic independence and stability in Indian Country. The report was a damning blow to the policy of allotment, which had initially been sold to congress as an “up-front” investment that would eventually promote greater self-reliance and slash Interior Department budgets. See, Lewis Meriam, et. al., *The Problem of Indian Administration: Report of a Survey Made at the Request of Honorable Hubert Work, and Submitted to Him, February 21, 1928* (The “Meriam” Report) (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1928). Also, Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Also, Emily Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Perces, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

Even as the Indian Service under the Coolidge Administration finally came to grips with allotments' most severe flaws, with the passage of the General Indian Citizenship Act in 1924 - that largely put to rest questions of "competence" and trust patents - and with the publication of the Meriam Report in 1928, which was the first comprehensive appraisal of reservation conditions since the Schoolcraft Report of 1850, the problems had already spiraled beyond control. According to the Meriam Report, an estimated 60 million acres of tribal land, nationwide, had passed into the public domain or into the hands of non-Indian homesteaders. The report also found that rather than increasing economic self-sufficiency and decreasing the strain on OIA funds and treaty trusts, allotment had actually strained these limited resources to their breaking point. In relation to declining economic production, the services provided on reservations, including schools, hospitals, sanatoriums, and other infrastructure had languished badly into disrepair, due to chronic underfunding and lack of personnel. As a general trend, the Indian reservations were economically disintegrating, under the watch of a hapless Indian bureaucracy.³

The insidious and institutional poverty invited and even encouraged by the course allotment contributed to a host of other vexing issues. Chiefly among those was the fact that consequences of the policies' implementation were, more often than not, in conflict with the program's stated and philosophical goals. For one, allotment had been designed as an - at least informal - union of religious and civic goals. Missions certainly fell within the same intent and orbit as the Indian Service schools and other "instructional" institutions. Yet, the policy seemed to only succeed in further estranging missionaries and civil servants. By the time the Meriam Report was published, the Methodist and Presbyterian

³ Lewis Meriam, et. al., *The Problem of Indian Administration: Report of a Survey Made at the Request of Honorable Hubert Work, and Submitted to Him, February 21, 1928* (The "Meriam" Report) (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1928).

mission infrastructure set up in Montana and Idaho had largely dried up. Protestants still dominated the Indian Service Schools, but their separate infrastructure had degraded. Catholic Missions remained, thanks to a stronger organizational hierarchy, the contributions of the BCIM, and local dioceses, but they were, nonetheless, in serious financial trouble as mission facilities languished right alongside the OIA's deteriorating infrastructure.⁴

Secondly, with massive effort and money put into agricultural training, five year plans, and development drives, the government was pushing allottees into a system in which many of them were failing. Instead of becoming independent land owners, many allottees had been pushed into the wage economy. Instead of channelling their energy into acceptable "civilized pursuits," many allottees found themselves forced down alternative pathways, and even toward criminal activities. Poverty also exacerbated extant problems that the OIA had hoped to curtail, including - but not limited to - liquor consumption, gambling, vagrancy, "irregular" marital relations, and subsistence hunting. The policies were designed to settle people into sedentary existences and invest them into their property, in reality they were encouraging vast sums of people to abandon their properties and search for any possible means of day-to-day dignity, comfort, and survival. It was a violent and destructive vortex, indeed.

⁴ In 1908, Nez Perce Presbyterian Missionary published her own history of the Presbyterians among the Nez Perces, in which she hints even at that time that the Presbyterian's effort among them was rapidly diminishing. While Protestants usually had an option to make a transition into the government infrastructure, the same could not be said for Catholics. This was partially due to the sympathy that the Indian Schools held for Protestants for much of the early-twentieth century. See, Katherine McBeth, *The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1993). Also, Edwin L. Chalcraft, Cary Collins, ed., *Assimilation's Agent: My Life as a Superintendent in the Indian Boarding School System* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). Also, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

The Missions, the Agencies, and Disintegration

In the period between general allotment's full implementation in Western Montana and the Idaho panhandle through to the policy's end, from 1911 through 1933, The Catholic missions in the region experienced an accelerated change of course. In terms of construction and physical expansion, the mission infrastructure had reached its zenith in the period between the completion of removal and confinement and the opening of the allotment era. In this time frame, roughly between 1880 and 1910, the missions had grown from tiny outposts to entire campuses of considerable scope. The initial small cabins and outposts that had housed "Catholic pioneers" like Joseph Cataldo, Adrian Hoecken, Peter Prando, and Philip Rappagliesi, gave way to brick churches and large meeting spaces. Around the churches had grown residences for both priests and sisters, dormitories, school buildings, granaries, warehouses, and managed farm fields. Indeed, entire communities had grown around these structures, which stitched together a broad and heterogeneous scope of the reservation as a whole. Comparable physical growth, however, came to a screaming halt in the decades of the Dawes Act.

Such stagnation accompanied a changing dynamic between the missions and the broader church within the region. In a certain sense, St. Joseph's Slickpoo Mission, St. Ignatius, and the Holy Family Two Medicine River Mission - along with its predecessors and satellites - had been among the "pioneer" institutions of what became the Boise Diocese of Idaho and the Helena Diocese of Montana. When St. Ignatius was founded in 1854, it stood as the sole outpost of the Catholic Church in the interior Northwest, it was technically tied to the Jesuit and Catholic infrastructure in the Oregon territory, but otherwise stood virtually outside of all nominal bounds of church hierarchy. Through the

1860s, Catholicism in the region, for the most part, remained the singular domain of Native Americans and their pastors. The Sacred Heart Mission among the Coeur d'Alenes appeared in 1862, and Cataldo's initial feelers onto the Nez Perce Reservation came in 1867, but little to any Catholic influence stood outside that. The following Catholic infrastructure grew around the missions.⁵

Vicariates for Montana and Idaho appeared in 1868, corresponding to their organization as territories. At the time they covered a population of about 20,000 people, out of whom only about 1,500 were considered to be Catholic. As Catholicism spread among Native Peoples and was energized by immigration - especially the mass-immigration of Irish Catholics into Western Montana - the extant mission infrastructure had helped shepherd this growth. The missions provided pastors and nuns for early Catholic parishes being setup in surrounding communities both on and adjacent to the reservations. Early Catholic presence in communities like Missoula, Helena, Kalispell, and Lewiston, the largest urban centers of the region, was both provided and sustained by the missions among the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces, among others. Organized religious development in the region had wholly depended on the Missions, and Catholic growth stood as a testament to the missions' most-broad-scale successes.⁶

As allotment wore on this relationship became entirely flipped. The missions came to more greatly rely on the dioceses and the surrounding Catholic communities for

⁵ Many Jesuits within the earlier mission system indeed thought of themselves as pioneers working outside the normative bounds of the church structure and hierarchy. Such a view point comes through in the personal writings of Fr. Louis-Marie Ruellan, S.J., Who served as a missionary among the Salish Indians of Montana, Idaho, and Washington through the 1870s and 80s and eventually helped to found Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. See, Cornelius M. Buckley, ed., *When Jesuits Were Giants: Louis-Marie Ruellan, S.J., 1846-1885, and his Contemporaries* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999).

⁶ Cyprian Bradley and Edward J. Kelly, *History of the Diocese of Boise, 1863-1952* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, 1953). Also, "Diocese of Helena," accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dhele.html>. Also, "Diocese of Boise," accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dbois.html>.

personnel and resources. An increased reliance on a local support network corresponded to a weakening of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions' financial strength. By the 1920s and 30s, Katharine Drexel's contributions, which had sustained such a large portion of the mission drive in the nineteenth century, were beginning to dwindle. Even by a decade into the twentieth century, Drexel's estate could no longer sustain covering BCIM expenditures with virtual "blank checks."⁷

In order to maximize dwindling resources in Drexel's estate, trusts were set up to help and support the missions. Their earnings, however, were quite limited and the missions' expenses could easily outpace them. Nonetheless, St. Ignatius, Holy Family, and St. Joseph's, along with the rest of the missions more generally, remained mostly dependent upon their trusts, along with monies claimed from the tribal fund for the costs of enrolling, boarding, and caring for students. New streams of revenue were needed - especially in light of the declining economic conditions on the reservations generally - to free the missions from the frustrations and stress of hand-to-mouth living. The BCIM set up and expanded national fundraising drives in an effort to increase cash flow, but even its successes were modest at best.⁸

In 1902, BCIM director Monsignor William Ketcham attempted to expand donation gathering by forming the Society for the Preservation of Faith among Indian Children,

⁷ For the cost of maintenance on mission facilities and churches, financial responsibility moved from BCIM to the dioceses. The financial contributions of the BCIM receded to filling in gaps in public and diocesan funding when private contributions made it possible. Letter: A. Sullivan, S.J., to Mon. William Ketcham, February 15, 1921, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 124, Folder 23, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee WI.

⁸ As early as 1921, reports to the BCIM from individual missions, indicate their being on the verge of bankruptcy. The primary reasons stated for their dire conditions, included the limited resources available from the trusts, and the high cost of hiring quality workers to maintain the missions. Specifically a report from St. Ignatius indicates Catholic's great dependency on labor and resources donated to them for free by the diocese and the surrounding communities. Report: A Sullivan, S.J., to William Ketcham, September 2, 1921, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 124, Folder 23, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

which lasted until 1922. In conjunction the BCIM also inaugurated the *Indian Sentinel*, a small print publication featuring stories of Catholic works at missions across the United States, testimonials from Indian converts, and pleas for additional financial support. The publication was initially released at the cost of twenty-five cents per annual subscription, in the hopes of cultivating a wide grassroots funding operation, with all proceeds going to support missions. The *Indian Sentinel*, which was printed until 1962, generated a circulation of over 80,000 subscribers in its first two years of existence. It failed, however, to ever gain more than modest sums of money dispensed for emergency purposes, generally the allocation of extra food, medicine, or clothing to places in crisis. Finally, considering the scope of the nationwide mission effort, whatever funds the *Sentinel* raised, were quickly spread thin.⁹

Weakened financial security came to be accompanied by a general deterioration of the mission facilities. Evidence of this came with the demise of St. Peter's Mission, from 1908 through 1918, which had been initially established at Ulm Creek, just off of the Blackfeet Reservation, in 1876 by the efforts of Fathers Camillus Imoda and Philip Rappagliosi. The mission had already been languishing when, in 1898, the Jesuits decided to begin removing their operations to Holy Family, but an Ursuline Girls' Academy remained at the site. In 1908 a fire destroyed much of the physical plant, which housed technical education and training facilities. The Ursulines petitioned the BCIM for funds to repair the damage, but were denied any sum beyond the insurance policy Drexel's estate held on the buildings. A second fire destroyed the Academy in 1918, spelling doom for the

⁹ Kevin Abing, "Directors of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions: Monsignor William Henry Ketcham, 1901-1921," *Historical Scope and Context, Marquette University Archival Collections*, <http://marquette.edu/library/archives/Mss/BCIM/BCIM-SC1-history1.shtml>. Also, *The Indian Sentinel*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1962), 33. Also, *The Indian Sentinel*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1962).

mission, as the BCIM decided to abandon the site. Similarly, in 1920, a fire destroyed the Sisters of Providence Girls' School at St. Ignatius. Fr. Joseph Bruckert, and his successor as mission Superior Father, Fr. Anthony Sullivan, S.J., petitioned the diocese and the BCIM for funds to restore the school, but none could be appropriated. The mission instead decided to divert students into the Ursulines' school, but it was quickly filled beyond capacity.¹⁰

Declining facilities and resources invited a host of other problems. Overcrowding through the 1920s contributed significantly to disease, with tuberculosis and influenza being among the primary calamities. Restricted money caused constant strife. The missions operated between deposits from their trusts, government reimbursements, and from the Society for the Preservation of Faith. Funds were spent immediately, and often had to be prioritized on a basis of urgency, delaying further needs and problems to the next round of payments. This stop-gap system bred constant and chronic shortages of even the most basic necessities. Supplies of flour and other basic staples stayed at critically low levels. The missions could ration supplies to stave off starvation, but hunger set in as a constant reality. For the average student boarded at the missions, their daily diets probably rarely ran in excess of 1000 calories daily, and subsisted primarily from bread and foods that could easily be stored and preserved, including potatoes, meal, and canned preserves. Furthermore, these starch-heavy diets contributed to a vast array of dental problems, and

¹⁰ Many of the girls that had been boarded at the Sisters of Providence's School at St. Ignatius were transferred from the Flathead Reservation to the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and a girls boarding school located at the De Smet Mission. St. Ignatius requested financial aid from the Bishop of the Helena Diocese to rebuild the destroyed school, but due to a general shortage of funds throughout the diocese the request was denied. Letter: Fr. A. Sullivan, S.J. to Mon. William Ketcham, October 1, 1920, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 21, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Also: Letter: Fr. A Sullivan, S.J. to Mon. William Ketcham, November 12, 1920, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 21, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

other health concerns. Basic clothing necessities, too, including shoes and warm weather gear remained always in short supply, making winters a harrowing ordeal, and occurrences of hypothermia, frostbite, and other exposure-related conditions a pervasive reality.¹¹

These problems, of course, mounted by stretching the missions' bare medical supplies thin. The clinics operated by Ursulines and Sisters of Providence - generally out of their schools on the three mission campuses - possessed little more than first aid and emergency capabilities. Most of what the sisters tended to was minor illness, broken bones, lacerations, and some amputations. Overflow spilled over into the agencies' taxed hospitals, where the waiting time for a physician or for the proper supplies could be extended into weeks or even months. Life for many in the missions had become horrid or nightmarish, and tragically, the disintegrating situation laid largely beyond the means of the of missions' priests and sisters to control.¹²

Of course, the declining missions existed within the context of a reservation infrastructure that was practically falling apart from the inside-out. For as bad as the mission schools had become, the government schools, in many ways, were even worse.

Integration into a Montana or Idaho public school system could be a mixed-bag of

¹¹ Accidents and other misfortunes could quickly make conditions go from bad to worse. Another fire at St. Ignatius Mission on February 20, 1922, destroyed much of the Ursuline Convent, and part of their school. One sister, sadly, lost her life in the fire, which otherwise destroyed \$80,000 worth of property, including food stores, and most of the clothing and bedding provided the girls boarded at the school. The convent had been insured by Mother Drexel for only \$14,500. Letter: A. Sullivan, S.J. to William Hughes, February 21, 1922, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 130, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

¹² The missions' medical infrastructure was, for the most part, codependent to the educational infrastructure, the two ran on shared budgets and shared facilities. As the missions' school capacities were spread thin, the ability of the missions to medically care for their charges grew increasingly limited. Letter: Sister Cataldo (St. Julian's Hospital) to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, January 29, 1921, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 124, Folder 23, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. See Also, Report: Dr. Emil Krulish, "Inspection of Flathead Agency Health Conditions," December 8, 1926, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 67, Folder 700-Health and Social Relations, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, "Health Reports for Fiscal Year 1930," Undated, Arlee, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 67, Folder 700-Medical Reports, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

blessings and curses. While, as a general rule, the public schools were better funded and better staffed, native students - nonetheless - faced the prospect of racial discrimination, hostility, and mistreatment. The Indian Service day schools located on the reservation were largely limited to the education of children too young to be boarded or sent to school far from home. In general, for the government schools, not only were shortages and overcrowding an ever-present reality, but their misery was compounded by frequent complaints of harsh treatment, insufficient rations of food, and poor health conditions. This frequently led to problems of truancy.¹³

Education reemerged as a major source of friction between Catholics and the Indian Service, with the primary victims of the conflict being the allottees themselves, and specifically the allottees who preferred to enroll or board their children with the missions. For those who chose to enroll their students with the Catholic missions their reasons were multi-faceted. For one, Indians who were themselves Catholic preferred the missions and to place their children in the hands of priests and nuns rather than in the government institutions that were still seen as largely Protestant. Beyond that, since the missions schools were located on the reservations, and their students boarded or enrolled strictly with the consent of parents, Native Peoples could exercise a greater measure of control over their children and their educations than they could with the government school.

¹³ Matters could be compounded by bad luck, and poor climate conditions. From a report to Fr. William Quinn, from A. Sullivan, S.J., he describes conditions for the mission and Catholic Flatheads as "The past three or four years [1917-1921] have been hard years for us... crop failure on account of drought and grass hoppers, high wages, high cost of living, etc. made our farming operations a loss rather than a help to us." Letter: A. Sullivan, S.J., to Fr. William Quinn, January 1, 1922, Washington D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 130, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. See Also, Leonard A. Carlson, *The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977).

Lastly, the missions held a far less nefarious reputation for cruelty and mistreatment than did the public and Indian Service Schools.¹⁴

The removal of native pupils from the mission schools by the Indian Service had been an intermittent issue going back to the nineteenth century. Occasionally the Indian Service had stepped in and reassigned students from the missions to keep government school enrollments up, and at other times anti-Catholic individuals within the Indian service had used their power to try and undermine the missions. Under allotment, however, student removals changed from a periodic annoyance to a systemic problem. And much of this problem hinged upon the fragile financial structure through which the missions operated. With a limited ability to fund students themselves, Catholics relied greatly upon monies from the OIA Education Division and, especially, tribal funds from annuities and trusts. Under a system dating back to the late nineteenth century, the missions filled out a substantial portion of their budgets by collecting reimbursements for the costs of boarding and enrolling students, set on a per capita basis with the costs of maintaining the government schools.¹⁵

Allotment greatly limited tribal control over the expenditure of their resources, particularly when it came to choice in education. Individuals classified as “Trust Indians” held virtually no control over their situations. With the title to their allotted land still held

¹⁴ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

¹⁵ The removals of students presented an intense structural issue for Catholic missionaries. Particular, it was a perceived threat to Catholics’ ability to maintain religious instruction among Indian children. Finally, similar to the complaints lodged during the Peace Policy, Catholics alleged that, once removed from the missions, students would be “Protestantized” in the government schools, and fought to be able to have access to government schools in cases where Protestant ministers were allowed to conduct biblical instruction in those same institutions. Letter: J. Halligan to Fr. William Hughes, February 18, 1922, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 129, Folder 21, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. See also, complaints about the removal of students at Heart Butte to the Cut Bank School, on the Blackfeet Reservation, from 1920. Letter: Joseph Cayton (Blackfeet Allottee) to William Ketcham, January 17, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

in trust, thus disallowing them from profitably disposing of the property, such individuals were governed and treated as wards of the Indian Service, and often times agencies took their ward status as pretext to micromanage broad facets of their life. So unless “Trust Indians” possessed the personal resources to board their children with the Catholics themselves – which would have been exceedingly rare – then they possessed no control over where their children would go once they reached schooling age, and unless individual agencies were willing to allow a “Trust Indian” their choice of schooling options, which happened, but not frequently, children were most likely to end up in the day schools, government boarding schools, or state public schools.¹⁶

Even for Indians who owned their property - referred to by the OIA as “citizen Indians” - control over their children, and over the appropriation of resources to which they were entitled was not a guarantee. Most of the complications here were introduced by the practice of “Forced Fee Patents,” made legal by the Burke Act of 1906. Unlike the land titles issued by request, that were necessary for an allottee to transfer their property from trust status to that of fee lands (where Indians held full ownership over their allotment), Forced Fee Patents could be issued without the allottees’ knowledge or consent. Once rendered, the patent opened allotted lands to taxation and the collection of back taxes. An allottee’s inability to settle accounts often resulted with the freezing or seizure of funds to which they were entitled, or in foreclosure and a general loss of property. Furthermore, even “citizen Indians” who could not maintain the costs of their property could choose or be compelled to transfer themselves back to trust status, re-restricting their control over other opportunities and entitlements. Apart from contributing to the general economic

¹⁶ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* Vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 659-686. Also, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

decline of the reservations, title issues introduced by allotment posed a serious threat to Catholics and other allottees who wanted to utilize the services provided by the missions.¹⁷

In spite of the mounting dire situation in the missions' coffers, and the deteriorating situation on the surrounding reservations, Catholics bent their efforts toward trying to hold their fracturing and fragmenting communities together. By the later phases of allotment much of that effort relied upon the goodwill and relationships Catholics had built among certain circles, both among the people living on the reservations and individuals in the Indian Service. The option existed for Catholics to challenge the removal of students and others from their missions through the BCIM, but such action never produced consistent results. Eventually the rallying cry of Catholics came down to arguing for confessional and educational freedom for the Native Peoples living under the power of the OIA, similar to political cause that had generated so much of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions' initial energy during the Grant Administration's Peace Policy. While the efforts of missionaries and of the BCIM stayed, for the most part, narrowly focused on voicing Indian Catholics' rights to access Catholic alternatives to government infrastructure, this rallying point also began to spiral outwardly into a more general outcry against allotment and the misery it engendered.¹⁸

¹⁷ The Catholic Church, and the Catholic Communities on the reservations emerged in the 1920s as seedbeds of anger and discontent with the status quo ushered in by allotment. While the missionaries certainly held knowledge of the meetings, and perhaps even participated, it appears that the grassroots discontent was coming primarily from allottees, with priests and sisters serving as guides and confidants. For example, in 1922, Catholic Indians from Flathead Reservation intended to put together a law suit, contending that allotment was a breach of their treaty, Catholics hired Burton K. Wheeler, a former gubernatorial candidate in Montana, and future senator to represent them. See: Letter: A. Sullivan to William Ketcham, April 22, 1922, St. Ignatius Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 124, Folder 23, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

¹⁸ Mon. Ketcham, and his replacement as the director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Mon. William Hughes, who replaced Ketcham in 1921, quickly became default allies of many people who sought to raise complaints against the status quo of allotment. Specifically the often acted as advisors to native leaders who came to bring their complaints directly to Washington, D.C., such as in the summer of 1920, when Ketcham hosted and advised a commission to Washington lead by Charlot, then the Head Chief of

The movement of opinion and resistance to allotment, however, grew so broad in its scope that Catholics - as the most organized dissenting institution - could not have possibly hoped to harness or control it. Rather, the church found itself swept up in the turmoil. Unlike dissent against the Peace Policy, where Catholics had lead from the forefront with their lawyers and lobbyists, resistance to allotment emanated from grass roots and common people. Where the church would ultimately land, and what would become of its remaining influence, were questions that laid beyond the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions' ability to anticipate. Once more, Indian Country was becoming an exceedingly dangerous place. No new threats of warfare or armed rebellion existed, but instead, Indian Country had become dangerous for the institutions that had once tried to control it. What the realities of allotment revealed, quite quickly, was that the agencies, the missions, and other institutions of control, conversion, and acculturation were losing their grip on the affairs of Indian Country.

Living under Allotment

For the people who actually had to live within the deteriorating conditions on the reservations, systemic issues were largely of little concern to them. Instead, their lives came to be patterned by a hierarchy of daily needs, food, shelter, comfort, and the concerns of family and loved ones. Many of them bravely struggled in quiet desperation, facing the problems over which they had some measure or illusion of control to the best of their abilities, and hoping and praying for aid or benevolence to help them confront problems

Flatheads. Letter: Charles Curtis to Mon. William Ketcham, Undated, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 123, Folder 25, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Also, Letter: Charles Curtis to Chief Charlot, Undated, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 123, Folder 25, Marquette University Special Collections, Box 123, Folder 25, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

that were largely beyond their abilities to face alone. As far as the agencies were concerned, their individual faces and problems were lost in a wash of statistics and bureaucratic red tape. Looking only at the overall of scope of allotment and its impact can detach us from the common realities faced by average people on a daily basis. Though few Indian voices come forward from the bureaucratic records kept by the Office of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, the few that emerge offer us a startling window into the desperation in which many people lived.

One such soul, living in a crowd of similarly desperate people was Philip Wells, a Piegan man who was born and raised Catholic, boarded at the Holy Family Mission School in the early twentieth century, and he was eventually allotted onto acreage that sat six miles from the sub-agency and Indian Service day school at Heart Butte, Montana. Once his two sons reached school age he enrolled them at Holy Family in 1912. In 1919 the agency canceled the Wells boys' vouchers and moved them to the Cut Bank public school. Both boys, however, quickly ran into trouble with the Indian police, due to truancy. The boys claimed they ran away from the Cut Bank School "as they was handed very ruff [sic]" and wanted "to go back to the mission."¹⁹ Wells' two younger children, who were ages six and eight in 1920, expressed an interest in going to school, prior to the age required for enrollment by the agency and the state of Montana. He lacked the resources to get them into the mission, and so he enrolled them at the Heart Butte Day School, six miles away.²⁰

In order to facilitate his children's education, since the school was too far from his allotment for his young children to reasonably travel, Philip setup a "camp in tent in brush

¹⁹ Letter: Tom Sandeville and Philip Wells to Fr. T.J. McCormak, January 7, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

²⁰ Letter: Tom Sandeville and Philip Wells to Fr. T.J. McCormak, January 7, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

near the Heart Butte Sub. [sic] Agency,” on the land of Tom Sandeville, a Catholic, who allowed Wells to stay.²¹ Wells received further permission from Sandeville to relocate the rest of his family to the campsite, which included his pregnant wife and his ailing mother. He abandoned his allotment due to its overall worthlessness, and the fact that his family's sole income came from the work that Philip Wells did for the sub agency in town. The land possessed no lumber, preventing Wells from being able to build a proper shelter, fence in his land, or even have firewood for heat. Since the allotment was not fenced in, cattle straying from other properties quickly picked over the grasses on the plot. By 1920, the land no longer even had enough grass on it to support the few horses that Wells owned.²²

Finally, in January 1920, Wells became compelled to write a letter to Holy Family Mission requesting aid, after a local farmer, A.C. Robinson, who lived adjacent to Sandeville, accused Wells of vagrancy and requested that the Indian Police remove him from the campsite and return him to his allotment.

If I should go home I would lose all my horses and the feed west side of the agency is good. If I could stay near the agency, I will be able to save my horses from dying. And I want to keep my children to school. ...I would like to stay at the agency until school is out on June 22, 1920, as I have got nothing to do at home. I want help to stay at this agency is what I am driving at, and not be runned away as my family are unable to be moved in bad weather and brought to what there is no wood any horses is so poor and weak they can't haul a load.²³

Unfortunately, what the priests could do for Philip Wells was extremely limited, other than to apply pressure to Robinson and convince him to leave Wells alone, or request that the

²¹ Letter: Tom Sandeville and Philip Wells to Fr. T.J. McCormak, January 7, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

²² Letter: Tom Sandeville and Philip Wells to Fr. T.J. McCormak, January 7, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

²³ Letter: Tom Sandeville and Philip Wells to Fr. T.J. McCormak, January 7, 1920, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Indian Police look the other way. Without resources from either Wells or the government, Holy Family could not board his school age children for him, and regardless, both the Jesuit boys' school and the girls' school were filled beyond their limited capacities. The heart-breaking truth was that Wells' travails were but one of an uncountable array of personal tragedies that missionaries and others encountered during allotment, on a near-daily basis, with little power to help or improve his life.²⁴

While Wells was simply doing what he deemed necessary to hold his family together despite his misfortunes, vagrancy became an endemic problem of allotment. Large portions of the 60 million estimated acres, nationwide, that passed out of tribal ownership did so through foreclosures and alienations of land caused by forced fee patenting and the allotment of subpar or unproductive lands (combined with a sporadic and uneven effort to supply allottees with the necessary means of developing their allotments). Some individuals, and even families, resorted to wandering, many of them psychologically and physically downtrodden by their misfortunes. Many simply morphed into vagabonds living on or even beyond the bounds of the law. They lived seemingly desperate existences, and were regarded almost uniformly by the Indian Service as n'er-do-wells who disrupted progress by demoralizing fellow allottees.

In 1910, the most reviled of these "vagrants," on the Flathead and Blackfeet Reservations, became a Piegan allottee by the name of Charles Curly Bear. Having alienated his holdings, he left Blackfeet Agency, and traveled to the Flathead Reservation. He arrived via train at Arlee in April, bearing a trunk-full of his possessions, apparently

²⁴ Letter: The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions to Philip Wells and Tom Sandeville, January 16, 1920, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 121, Folder 19, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

scraping a living from begging and “writing cards” for people.²⁵ Bringing Curly Bear to the attention of the agency, and of Superintendent Fred. C Morgan, was his supposed involvement in tribal politics after his arrival. Curly Bear was said to be attending councils, and spending his days talking with the Flathead tribal elders and members of the tribal council, discussing treaty rights and how allotment had breached them.²⁶

Morgan was, at the same time, dealing with discontented members of the tribal business council and other elders - Sam Reselection, Louson Red Owl, Louie Vanderburg, Peter Jo Hi Hi, Antee, and Martin Charlo Chief - who, in March 1910, wrote a letter to the President of the United States, complaining that Morgan had sold cattle from the agency and then embezzled the money. Believing that Curly Bear was responsible for helping to rile-up the Flatheads against him, Morgan had him detained, brought to the agency, and then ordered off of the Reservation.²⁷

Curly Bear protested his removal to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, C.F. Hauke. According to Curly Bear, he was brought to the agency at 1:15 pm, April 16th, and made to wait for Morgan until 3:45. After being ordered to leave, Curly Bear declared that he ignored the command because “the Indians of [Flathead] Reservation told me the Agent was wrong for ordering me way for I didn’t do wrong anything or harm or distrust

²⁵ Memorandum: Frederick C. Morgan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁶ Letter: Frederick C. Morgan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 3, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁷ Complaints against Morgan. Letter: Sam Reslection et. al. to William Howard Taft, March 1, 1910, Arlee, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 2025, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: R.G. Valentine to Louie Vanderburg et. al., March 24, 1920, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 2025, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Removal Order: Letter: Frederick C. Morgan to C.F. Hauke, April 28, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

anyone.”²⁸ Curly Bear, further claimed that he had received permission for a visit to Flathead from the Agent of Blackfeet Reservation, Arthur McFartridge. When the OIA learned, however, that Curly Bear did not, in fact, possess such a permission they authorized Morgan to forcibly remove him in May.²⁹

Curly Bear left the Reservation, for Missoula, Montana, but returned in October, where he continued to take part in meetings and councils with tribal elders. Morgan was now thoroughly tired of him, and requested permission to have him forcibly returned to the Blackfeet Agency. In a letter sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on October 19, 1910, Morgan claimed:

He again returned to this reservation, in company with Antoine Ninepipes [a tribal leader], and Penama Pokerjim and Rosalie Isaacs, the two last being married, and their husbands living on the reservation. While waiting for the train at Missoula Curley [sic] Bear was seen by our lease clerk in the public waiting room of the depot with his arm around Penama Pokerjim. Yesterday, an Indian of this reservation came to the office and informed me that he and others had seen [him] in the restaurant at Arlee with these two women, and that he would put his arm around, and take other liberties, with Rosalie Isaac.³⁰

From there, Morgan was given the latitude to deal with Curly Bear as he saw fit. Along with accusations of stirring malcontent, evidence of “anti-social” behavior was more than enough to convince the Office of Indian Affairs of the need to control Curly Bear and individuals like him. Earlier complaints about him had focused on his “idleness.” “He came

²⁸ Letter: Charles Curly Bear to C.F. Hauke, April 18, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

²⁹ Letter: Charles Curly Bear to C.F. Hauke, April 18, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Letter: C.F. Hauke to Arthur McFartridge, May 14, 1910, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁰ Letter: Frederick C. Morgan to C.F. Hauke, October 19, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

here and made no attempt to perform any labor,” Frederick Morgan wrote about Curly Bear in May, 1910, “notwithstanding the fact that there was ample opportunity for all idle Indians to secure employment on the irrigating ditches.”³¹

Despite his eccentricities, Charles Curly Bear and other “vagrants” posed a serious threat to the Indian Service, both because they refused to place the same value in “labor and progress” as allotment had intended, and because their lives and material conditions stood as empirical examples of allotment’s contradictions and failures. As such they became *personae non gratae* around the government outposts, and even often around the missions. Unsurprisingly blame for social discord, crime, and other civic problems that were deeply rooted in larger and more systemic issues often became disproportionately heaped upon “shiftless,” and “idle” Indians who passed through and congregated near the towns and the agencies.

Even those living under less dire situations found considerable disappointment with the promises that were made to them when their reservations were first opened to allotment and settlement. Ellis Kipkipalican, who served on the Nez Perce's Tribal Business Council through much of the 1920s, expressed his frustrations at a meeting of the council held at the agency in Lapwai, Idaho, December 6, 1926. Recalling the point at which allotment had initially been rolled out on the Nez Perce Reservation, Kipkipalican, mourned that he, and others, had been promised property, opportunity, and ultimately equality with whites. Instead, he claimed that the Nez Perce had been duped, their lands parceled into trusts, or

³¹ Letter: Frederick C. Morgan to C.F. Hauke, May 3, 1910, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 31, Folder 33158, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

alienated, and the promises of citizenship and equality left to ring hollow by amendments to allotment such as the Burke Act.³²

Shortly after the passage of the Burke Act, Lapwai Agency, and Superintendent Oscar Lipps issued Kipkipalican forced fee patents on portions of the lands. Though the collection of fees and taxes on his property did not cripple him economically, so as to force him into the alienation or sale of his allotted lands - as was the case for many others - it nonetheless cost him dearly and embittered him.

I did not ask for these papers, but any rate [sic] they were handed to me. I was told these papers were supposed to carry with it the privileges and rights of the United States citizen. I was told I could exercise these rights and privileges and that I should go and enjoy these rights and privileges same as any other citizens. However, these papers did not change me into white man. I am still an Indian with long hair. You see I still have moccasins on and I have blankets to wear. I like the ways of white people and I believe some good white people like us, but not very many.³³

Ideals of equality and citizenship often and quickly became emasculated or hollowed by the paternalism of the Indian Service. Humiliation and anger abounded for people who felt they were being scammed by "bait-and-switch" bureaucratic tactics, or flatly lied to by hollow promises the Indian Service seemed to make without any intention of keeping.³⁴

Indians' dubious legal status, either as "wards" or "citizen Indians" based upon the fee or trust status of their allotted lands could wreak havoc with their lives, as their official place within the United States and the states, counties, and municipalities where they resided remained unresolved. Such was the case for twenty-two-year-old Joseph Larivee,

³² "The Minutes of the Tribal Business and Advisory Committee, Held at the Fort Lapwai Indian Agency," December 6, 1926, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 52154, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³³ "The Minutes of the Tribal Business and Advisory Committee, Held at the Fort Lapwai Indian Agency," December 6, 1926, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 52154, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁴ "The Minutes of the Tribal Business and Advisory Committee, Held at the Fort Lapwai Indian Agency," December 6, 1926, Lapwai, Idaho, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 2, Folder 52154, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

an allottee of the Flathead Reservation, whose property was still being held in trust by the United States Government in 1917. Following the United States' entrance into World War I, debate raged in the War Department about the eligibility of Native Peoples for conscription into the United States Armed Services, in order to fill a significant need in manpower. Convinced of the possibility of his ultimate conscription, Larivee traveled from the Flathead Reservation to Missoula, Montana, where he enlisted in the United States Army in May. He did so figuring his fate as an enlisted man would be better than his fate as a draftee.³⁵

The following month the War Department ruled that "non-citizen" Indians were to be exempted from draft eligibility. The ruling came down thanks to pressure from native leaders, and Western politicians, who argued it was unreasonable to draft individuals who had neither the privileges nor rights of American Citizenship. All of this was of little help, however, to Joseph Larrivee. On August 28, 1917, Larrivee's step father, William Irvine, another allottee, wrote to the Indian Service about Larrivee's circumstances, hoping to nullify his enlistment. "My wife and I are getting old," Irvine pleaded, "we need him home, and trust something can be done to return him to us."³⁶ Complicating circumstances was the question of whether or not Larrivee had willingly and voluntarily enlisted, since, as he and his family claimed, he had felt compelled by an impending threat of conscription that was now no longer an issue.³⁷

³⁵ Letter: William Irvine to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 28, 1917, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 92087, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁶ Letter: William Irvine to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 28, 1917, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 92087, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁷ Letter: William Irvine to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 28, 1917, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 92087, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

His file came to be put before the desk of Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs E.B. Meritt. The wheels put in motion by his enlistment, however, could not be stopped, not in the least, because the Indian Service showed little interest in exempting Larrivee from service. Meritt's response to the Irvines reads as follows:

In answer you are advised that the fact that your son anticipated being drafted and voluntarily enlisted before it was known that non-citizen Indians would not be subject to the draft does not entitle him to be discharged from the Service on that ground. There are in the service of the Army and Navy at this time many young Indians who volunteered previous to the draft, and to hold that those who are non-citizens should be discharged, in view of the ruling referred to, would work incalculable injury to the Service.³⁸

The mistake pulled Larrivee away from his home and his familiar world for the duration of the First World War. Larrivee's tale illuminated much about the contradictions of allotment. At the same time that native individuals like Larrivee were pressed into the duties that came with their "progress" to American citizenship, they realized little actual effect of the rights and justice such citizenship was simultaneously meant to entail.³⁹

Tragedy, injustice, misfortune, and anger abounded in day-to-day life for many and even most of the people living under the Dawes Act. Allotment seemed, without much doubt, to send communities into a spiral of dysfunction while it promised "order" and "progress," the latter of which too few people were actually noticeably realizing in the daily business of their lives. The "legitimate" economy that the OIA was trying to establish on reservations, with varying levels of aid from other institutions including the Catholic missions, was utterly failing for a large portion of people who were supposed to benefit

³⁸ Letter: E.B. Meritt to William Irvine, October 6, 1917, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 92087, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³⁹ Letter: Theodore Sharp to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 25, 1917, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 92087, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

from it. With this being the case other alternatives, including ones that skirted or outright flaunted the bounds of legality, became increasingly attractive for a growing number of people. Beyond the problems that allotment actively created, it was also inviting a more general decay of peaceful community life on the Indian reservations in the West.

Bootlegging

In Western Montana and the panhandle of Idaho the illegal manufacture and sale of alcohol became, in and of itself, a major “industry.” It was a black market that drew both Indians and Americans alike into its orbit, and equally attracted profiteers and opportunists, along with desperate people who could not support themselves solely through the legitimate marketplace. This black market, furthermore, found itself fueled by an incredible demand for intoxicants on the reservations and in the communities surrounding them. The general prohibition against the sale of alcohol enacted constitutionally in 1919 only heightened demand, as the political high-tide of the temperance movement produced an even stronger reaction against it, particularly in the American West.

Bootlegging liquor remained an untamed nemesis of a broader, largely middle class, movement to bring “civility and stability” to the West.⁴⁰ Such reform, with its roots in the nineteenth century, largely viewed the West as a distended jungle of savagery, immigrants, racial undesirables, and - above all else - unruly males. For middle-class America, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the infamy and “depravity” of boomtowns and railroad stops with their saloons and whorehouses colored their perceptions of the region as much or more than myths and tales of adventure and daring. The remedy to these “horrors” stood, always, as the civil-bedrock of the church-going

⁴⁰ Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 310.

family and the church-centered community. Young men needed to be dragged out of the saloons and into the home with a moral and upstanding wife. As such, temperance formed the tip-of-the-spear of Western Reform, with Protestant churches and their communities leading the way.⁴¹

Temperance was, however, an incoherent movement that produced uneven results. While Protestants stood ubiquitously at the forefront of temperance, they remained, especially in the American West, a diverse and spread-out lot. Without the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, Protestant ministers and churches often found that connecting with a consistent church-going community could be an elusive goal, due to the sheer variety of options presented to prospective congregations. Adding to that disunity was the fact that Catholics, while far better organized than Protestants, were largely tepid toward the prospects of temperance, owing to the ethnic and cultural contexts out of which many Catholics came. When Montana entered statehood in February, 1889, it did so with a constitution that put in place few if any restrictions on the sale of alcohol. This seemingly reflected the heavily Irish and Catholic inflection of the state's early population. Butte, which nearly tripled in size between 1890 and 1900, from a city of about 10,000 souls to around 30,000, and reached its zenith in 1920, with a population of 41,611 people, was dominated by an Irish Catholic culture and citizenry, which filled out the labor pool of the city, state, and region's major industry - copper mining - and also dominated the city's politics while profoundly influencing the early states' politics. Idaho, on the other hand, emerged into statehood in 1890 leaning the other direction, allowing communities to ban

⁴¹ The saloon, in the minds of reformers, stood as their principal enemy institution. It was often seen as the counterpoint to the church, the source of sin, of fallen women, of prostitution, male promiscuity, and a force that attacked the family and foundation of a healthy community and society. See, Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

the sale of liquor by referendum. As a result, Idaho became largely a dry state through much of its early existence, owing both to the well-established Methodist tradition in the region, springing forward from the missions of the Spaldings and Whitman's, among others, and also to the Mormon influence centered in the southern portion of the state around cities like the capital, Boise, which exploded in population between 1900 and 1910 from 5,957 to 17,358 residents, and Pocatello, which had a population of 1,659 residents upon Idaho's statehood, and grew to a population of 15,001 by 1920.⁴²

While temperance in white communities was one matter, however, temperance among Indians was quite another, witnessing a confluence of opinion that spanned the borders of ethnicity, race, and confession, at least among elites. Here the agreement was that Indian consumption of liquor or the sale of liquor to Indians was an evil that needed to be tightly controlled, regulated, and punished. Even Indian leaders themselves, going back to some of the earliest initial treaty talks, viewed liquor as a social and civic problem that they would like to see rooted out from amongst their ranks. This attitude emanated from the legacy of liquor as a tool of exploitation used by American traders. The legal precedent stood even more deeply embedded with an 1832 federal law making the sale of liquor to Indians explicitly illegal. Furthermore, regulation of trade between Indians and Americans extended to a system of licenses, which eventually tried to give individual agencies and tribal governments greater control over whom, specifically, they conducted commerce with.⁴³

⁴² See, Carlos Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). Also, for a history of Irish immigrants in Butte, and their impact on local and state politics, see, David E. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

⁴³ David N. Dejong, *"If You Knew the Conditions": A Chronicle of the Indian Medical Service and American Indian Health Care* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010). Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 246-291. Francis Paul Prucha,

Yet, despite the remarkable consensus, there seemed to be few if any other issues that American and Indian leaders so whole-heartedly agreed upon, and the stiff criminal fines and penalties placed upon its distribution, to go along with the risk inherent in its illicit manufacture, an utter inability to control liquor remained a continual black eye on the Indian Services' record. The agencies at Lapwai, Dixon, and Browning - along with others across the west for that matter - almost universally characterized it as an enforcement problem. From their perspective, the sheer numbers of arrests and convictions produced by the Indian Police and the Indian Courts, to go along with the local jurisdictions, demonstrated their commitment to stamping out the problem. Yet, they always declared shortages of officers and equipment. They were doing the best they could to stem the tide, but the problem outpaced the availability of resources. Religious leaders and missionaries, and particularly Catholics, tended to frame the issue according to the limits of their moral authority and influence. From the perspective of Catholics it appeared that liquor problems resided almost exclusively outside the confines of their own church-going community. The problem of this perspective, despite the obvious untruth of its claim, was that Catholics - nor anyone else for that matter - could never delineate just exactly what the limits of their moral authority were. As far as the reservation and tribe at large were concerned Catholics viewed themselves as community stewards who dealt in guidance rather than discipline, and who wielded "wisdom" rather than police power.⁴⁴

American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 169-192.

⁴⁴ Statistics and Reports from the Blackfeet Reservation over a five year period from 1928 through 1932, show a staggering commitment to try and stop and arrest bootleggers, but the problem persisted on, nonetheless. "Statistics, 1930-1944," Undated, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-19-133, Box 9, Folder 050 Statistics, 1930-1944, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, "Annual Report for 1928," Undated, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 9, Folder 052 Narrative Section Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1928, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, "Annual Report for 1932," Undated,

Neither institution, however, could come to grips with the alcohol problem within the context of a wider civic crisis. The expanding black markets on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations held a strong correlative link to poverty and declining economic opportunity. In particular, the link seemed to all-but-completely elude the administrators of the three agencies, and the reasons for this become clear when examining the bureaucratic structure of the Indian Service. Reams of monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports quickly reveal the Indian Services' single-minded obsession with quantities. The OIA measured itself and its progress in terms of infrastructural statistics: the acreage of farmland enclosed by fences, the amount of acres plowed, the amount of cattle owned, numbers of school houses built. Even when dealing with the management of the agencies, the OIA all-but-exclusively measured itself quantitatively, by the number of school seats filled, numbers of arrests, numbers of Indian Police employed, and so on and so forth. Little if any energy, however, was expended in an effort to explore the meanings and relationships that laid within the statistics that the Indian Service spent considerable energy gathering.⁴⁵

Problems compounded with racial and cultural baggage that bogged down the OIA's ability to assess the situation. The chief hurdle was an entrenched ideology brought into the Indian bureaucracy in the 1880s by religious and civil reformers loosely referred to

Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Folder 052 Annual Statistical and Narrative Reports for 1932, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

⁴⁵ Statistics gathered from the individual agencies were then published in the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, which ran from 1826 to 1932. These same reports reveal the bureaucratic single-mindedness of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on quantitative metrics of evidence of "progress," defined broadly as new infrastructure and projects, and proofs of employment opportunity. Poor conditions on reservations, and the Indian Service's negligence to such things, appear, too, to have been a function of the bureaucracy's inefficiencies and the difficulty required in reforming the office and the institution. See, Ronald N. Johnson and Gary Libecap, *The Federal Civil Service System and the Problem of Bureaucracy: The Economics and Politics of Institutional Change* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

as the “Friends of the Indian,” and institutionalized in the General Allotment Act, which remained firmly entrenched into the 1920s. The architecture and execution of allotment hinged upon an assumption that most Native Peoples held within them the “capacity” for a “civilized existence,” but that on their own, their civilizations had failed to advance, absent the influence of Euroamericans. In essence, Indian peoples could be accelerated upon the path to civilization, given the guidance and tools. This, of course, assumed a linear and singular course of “progress,” and assumed further that technology and knowledge alone bridged the gulf between Euroamerican and Indian civilizations.⁴⁶

Unsurprisingly, this lead administrators and inspectors, in their analyses of reservation conditions, to draw causal relationships between an assumed status of “native ignorance” and social and civic problems. Likewise, alcoholism, petty crime, vagrancy, and other undesirable “qualities” tended, more often than not, to be attributed to an overall “uncivilized” status. In framing issues this way, Indian Service bureaucrats unconsciously placed the onus for failure on individual Indians’ inability to adapt. And this blinded the reservations’ administrators to larger-scale structural problems. Even as the Indian Service came to collectively recognize the failures of allotment in the late twenties and leading into the Indian New Deal, the notion that civic problems on Indian reservations stood rooted in a failure to properly “advance” and “civilize” remained insidiously in the OIA’s group consciousness.

⁴⁶ A paternalistic benevolence within the people and institutions that spearheaded Indian Reform and the Dawes Act were among the policy’s chief flaws, which were hampered by a dismissal of Native forms of organization and adaptation, and instead demanded a “linear” conformity to preconceived, Eastern, and distinctly Protestant notions of civilizational progress. See, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings of the “Friends of the Indian,” 1880-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Also, David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1995). Also, Jason Edward Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment* (Oxford, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2015).

A growing number of Native Peoples living on the reservations in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, however, were becoming acutely aware of the relationship between the alcohol problem and a broader problem of poverty. They sensed that the alcohol problem centered in the towns and homesteads, where idle people, and particularly young men, without work or purpose convened to gamble and drink. The solutions they overwhelmingly proposed were incentives to call people away from the pool halls and gambling lounges and put them to work, on something that they would own. A mounting cry from Indian communities, and especially from the elder leadership was to curtail crime and drinking by giving young men a place and a purpose in society.⁴⁷

Even these outcries, which arose organically from within the tribal communities on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, however, failed to grasp the full dimensions of the illicit liquor market and economy, though they hinted quite poignantly at one of the chief forces driving demand and consumption. On a greater scale, however, the black market emerged and operated as a byproduct and consequence of allotment and other “civilizing” policies. The relationship between allotment and the black market is what made the trade in liquor so pernicious, so pervasive, and, despite the massive effort put into stopping it, so persistent.

Of course, an illegal trade in intoxicants existed on the three reserves prior to their being allotted between 1902 and 1911. This earlier trade, however, was dominated almost-exclusively by individual opportunists - frequently non-Indian residents of surrounding

⁴⁷ Putting people to work, so as to keep them away from pool halls is common thread of reformers, Indian Activists, and missionary throughout the period in question. See, “Report of Hearing Held at the Indian Office, May 2, 1912,” Lapwai Idaho. Records Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, Fort Lapwai Agency. Box 3, Folder 41893-12. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, “Intoxicants, Drugs, Etc.,” April 7, 1936 - August 25, 1941, Arlee, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 14, Folder 027 Intoxicants, Drugs, Etc., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

communities - who attempted to smuggle beer and liquor onto the reserves for sale. As the allotment era wore on, however, the contours and dynamics of liquor running quickly morphed into a wide scale business, including both non-Indians and enrollees, supplied through a variety of methods, including smuggling, small-batch brewing, and manufacture from hidden local stills.⁴⁸

Tracing the outlines of this black market are difficult, and foggy-at-best, considering it requires inferences from Indian Police and Indian Court records about arrests, seizures, and confiscations, which do not always reveal the names and identities of suspects and perpetrators. Nonetheless, the records are sufficient to bring a skeletal outlay into clearer view, out of which careful suppositions can be made. Looking at Western Montana and the Idaho panhandle from 1902 - marking the opening of the Nez Perce Reservation - to 1916 - marking that year that Idaho as a state went dry, prior to national prohibition - trends point to reservation towns, such as Polson, Dayton, Browning, Kamiah, and Lapwai, being the primary destinations of liquor trafficking. Between 1916 and 1920, where national prohibition went into enforcement, this trend becomes less readily discernable, in no small part thanks to temperance movement's interconnections with World War I politics, which ultimately produced the 18th Amendment, and which caused Idaho to go dry on January 1, 1916, and Montana to go dry on December 31, 1918. The pattern distorts, quite simply, because the advance of general prohibition, overtaking limited bans on the sale of liquor to Indians, flooded the black market with waves of new consumers.

⁴⁸ On the problem of bootlegging, and the ban against the sale of liquor. Memorandum: E.B. Merritt to C.L. Ellis, June 3, 1915, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 5, Folder 026-6/15/1915, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

Liquor flowed into the reservation towns following a stream of people and disposable income, with the largest draw being the towns' numerous gambling and pool halls. While such establishments were explicitly illegal, they were nonetheless difficult to track down and stamp out, because they remained mobile, moving to different host locations in stores, homes, barns, and other structures to avoid detection. The towns, however, were also centers - more generally - of reservation commerce, and it seems likely that even proprietors and managers of otherwise legitimate retail could be tempted to maintain illicit stocks of beer and liquor, considering the foot traffic produced by "idles and vagrants" - people who roamed the towns, day laborers, wage laborers, and farmers and ranchers who frequented the town sites for supplies and entertainment.⁴⁹

Where the contraband being sold in towns like Browning, Polson, and Kamiah, originated appears to have been from the outlying urban centers in Montana and Idaho prior to prohibition. With relative ease Americans could purchase large quantities of liquor in near-by towns and cities. Missoula, Montana, with a population of about 12,896 people by 1910, stood only about 26 miles, by road, away from the Arlee Homestead, and the southern arm of the Flathead Reservation. To the north, Kalispell, with a population of about 5,549 people by 1910, sat only 36 miles away from Dayton, and the northern reservation access. Cut Bank, Montana remained a remote small town, barely 500 residents in 1910, but stood right on the reservation's boundary. Great Falls, Montana, however, already a burgeoning town at the turn of the century, with a population over 14,000, was - by road - only about 120 miles from Browning and the heart of the Blackfeet Reservation.

⁴⁹ The Indian Service was acutely aware that the communities surrounding the reservations were not only a vital source of legitimate supplies for the reservations, but also a source of criminal activity as well. How the Indian Courts and Reservation police were to contain those problems, however, remained a constant conundrum for the agencies. Letter: F.C. Campbell to E.B. Merritt, September 15, 1920, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 25, Folder 35913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Lewiston, Idaho, which was not dry until 1916, held a population of over 6,000 and stood a mere twelve miles West of Lapwai, and by road was about 65 miles from Kamiah.⁵⁰

The Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railway Systems, furthermore, appear to have been a significant entrepôt for liquor smuggling. Having expanded since the initial completion of the Northern Pacific in 1883 and the Great Northern a decade later, the network largely linked up the Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet reservations with nearly the entirety of the northern United States. The mainline of the Northern Pacific, running northwest from Missoula, made two stops on the Flathead Reservation, at Arlee, and near Dixon at the Old Agency site. And while the main line ran north of the Nez Perce Reservation, a spur from Spokane, Washington, serviced Kamiah, Cul de Sac, and Lapwai, all on the agency. Further northeast, the Great Northern established a major depot at East Glacier Village, using it as a service entrance for Glacier National Park. Furthermore, the prevalence of hotels and other tourist-based business in East Glacier exempted it from the reservation liquor ban despite its location within the boundaries of the agency.⁵¹

While discerning where contraband came from, and where it moved, presents a relatively simple task, sketching out just exactly who moved it remains somewhat difficult to answer. The role of whites as initial purchasers and purveyors of stock seems both reasonable and logical, and yet, considering the historical laxity of local law enforcement

⁵⁰ Census and geographic data taken from, Merrill D. Beale and Merle W. Wells, *History of Idaho* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1959). Also, Bill Yenne, *Glacier National Park* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2006). Also, Alan James Matthews, *A Guide to Historic Missoula* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society, 2002). Also, Kathryn L. McKay, *A Guide to Historic Kalispell* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society, 2001). Also, Ken Robison, *Cascade County and Great Falls* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011).

⁵¹ A comprehensive inspection undertaken by assigned Special Agent F. W. Michael of the Blackfeet Reservation in 1916, is revealing of the dynamics of the, so called “liquor epidemic” [sic] there. Reports describe a “free-floating population” of both whites and Indians willing to move liquor from East Glacier Park onto the reserve and elsewhere. It also indicates that few shop owners or saloon operators from off the reservation cared much in differentiating to whom they made their sales. See, L.W. Michael, “Inspection Report of Blackfeet Agency,” November 16, 1916, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Blackfeet Agency, Box 47, Folder, 119612-1916, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

toward Indian liquor consumption and other matters that largely only affected the Indian Service internally, it is doubtful that white Americans acted alone. Native Peoples likely moved right alongside whites in purchasing contraband off of the reservations with the intent of smuggling and distributing it. Shop owners off of the reservations faced few consequences for selling liquor to Indians from neighboring reservations, few received criminal charges, and even fewer faced convictions.⁵² As for moving stock onto reservations, and transporting it around them, it seems likely that Native Peoples took on the lion's share of the work. Traders and distributors who brought other items on to the reservation from surrounding communities conceivably could have, and most certainly did, smuggle contraband along with their other wares, but only with a greater degree risk.⁵³

For one, bringing trade goods onto reservations required licensure, which was regulated through the agencies rather than local authorities, and required to be frequently renewed. Any breach of law gave the agencies all the pretext they needed to cancel a merchant's license indefinitely. The fact that the majority of smugglers caught by Indian Police appeared to be unauthorized non-Indians could indicate a prevalence of non-Indians in the trade as a whole. On the other hand, since the black market ran rampant despite the

⁵² From 1909 through 1911, Flathead Agency pursued the indictment of Elmer Hardy, a resident of Missoula, Montana, for his illegal sale of liquor to Sam Reselection, a "full-blooded" allottee and resident of St. Ignatius. Hardy however, was never even successfully indicted, in spite of eyewitness evidence, as Sam Reselection had been caught transporting liquor back to the reservation, and offered a deal if he testified against Hardy. Among the evidence gathered for the case, was the fact that Hardy, himself, was a mixed-blood, though currently unrecognized, applying for allotment on the Flathead Reservation, again demonstrating the likelihood and presence of Indians in all levels of the liquor black market. OIA Case File 67745, August 18, 1909 - May 17, 1911, Helena, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 25, Folder 67745, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵³ In 1909, the Indian Police on Flathead Reservation broke up one instance of what was probably a fairly common form of smuggling. Henry Clairmont, a mixed-blood allottee of the reservation, purchased a gallon of whiskey in Missoula, Montana, and boarded the Northern Pacific train. Upon getting off at the Arlee stop, he was searched, discovered to be possession of contraband, arrested, and charged. He fell under suspicion, supposedly, because of the Indian Police's full knowledge that the train was being used to smuggle liquor. Letter: J.W. Freeman (United States Attorney, Helena, Montana) to the Attorney General, March 31, 1909, Helena, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 24, Folder 26881, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

arrests this suggests instead that the enforcement measures of the Indian Police profiled non-Indians who had no legitimate business on the reservation. These sorts of would-be smugglers also would have been the most readily visible. Finally, even though a small, legitimate on-reservation liquor business existed, supplying the churches and missions with sacramental wine and clinics with alcohol used for medicinal and sanitary purposes, this business was thoroughly regulated and accounted for, making it a risky and poor avenue for smuggling. Alternatively, enrollees carrying contraband held a greater chance of escaping the authorities' attention. It is likely that a great number of Native Peoples were involved in smuggling stock.⁵⁴

Bringing allottees and enrollees into this black market was undoubtedly the allure of profit. It is impossible to gauge just how much money the trade earned, and equally difficult to take measurements of how profits were being divided, however, considering the consistent reports of both wide demand for and availability of liquor on the Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet Reservations throughout the period in question, it may have been one of the largest "industries" in the region. It certainly provided opportunity in an economic climate increasingly dominated by low-wage jobs and dependency upon annuities, leases, or other forms of relatively meager passive income. For individuals who could not support themselves for any variety of reasons, the black market offered a path to income as an alternative to the limitations of the white market.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Both proprietors who opened shop in the incorporated town sites and the merchants who supplied them were regulated by a license system, and inventories of items brought onto the reservation by licensed merchants were carefully regulated. Illicitly obtained stock, however, would have been far more difficult for the agencies to police and stop. Concerning store establishment, Letter: C.F. Hauke to the Agent of Flathead Reservation, September 17, 1908, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Folder 305-Polson Townsite, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

⁵⁵ While the connections between poverty and crime are a deeply studied topic of the dysfunction found in American inner-cities, many comparable conditions existed historically on reservations, where sociological theory and study draws strong correlative relationships between the prevalence of poverty and "profit-

The limitations were considerable. Leasing, which had emerged as the dominant form of agrarian income on the Nez Perce Reservation, was a risky business market. In order to attract lessees, allottees required significant capital for the upkeep of their lands. Agriculture, however, was a cash-poor business. Lease fees stood at the top of a pyramid of debt. Farmers and ranchers, both Indian and non-Indian, lived in cycles of constant debt, needing cash up-front to support the costs of acquiring and maintaining cattle, maintaining equipment, and planting crops, and all this was done on the speculation that the year's take would cover debts. If the system wavered at any level, the entire pyramid came crashing down, thus allotted landlords often found themselves forced to renegotiate and reduce their fees. Beyond this, wage labor across all three reservations was a rocky and insecure marketplace. Most forms of work available, which included construction and ranch and farm hand work supplied by non-Indians and allottees who owned enough to afford to employ extra help, were seasonal, and workforces were quickly liquidated once the task at hand was complete. Handy-man and other "odd job" opportunities existed in the town sites and at the missions, but, again, their availability was unpredictable and their term almost universally short. Most likely the liquor trade filled in these considerable economic gaps, offering an avenue for individuals to keep a source of income between the seasons where the white market wage-opportunities spiked, during plants, harvests, roundups, brandings, and other events that patterned the agrarian calendar.⁵⁶

seeking" crime, such as the movement of illicit goods and substances. In essence, the black market provides moderate to high risk opportunities when few or no legal avenues exist or are present. See, Lewis D. Solomon, *Cycles of Poverty and Crime in America's Inner Cities* (Livingston, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

⁵⁶ On both a regional and national scale, allotment had reduced most reservation economies to a temporary labor workforce, most resources pooled in the hands of a very few individuals and the majority of the rest of residents were subject to an extremely uncertain wage labor market. See, Donald Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century: American Capitalism and Tribal Natural Resources*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2011). Also, Robert J. Miller, *Reservation "Capitalism": Economic*

The on-coming of prohibition at the end of World War I again reshaped the region's liquor trade. As the sale of beer and spirits became generally illegal, contraband flowed not only onto the three reservations, but through them and from them, back to communities that had, at one time, been the primary suppliers. The most significant structural change in the market, other than the astronomically increased demand for illegal beverages, became the sources of supply, in which the reservations became important components. Production of moonshine exploded almost overnight, after the region became fully, formally dry as of December 31, 1918. The Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet Reservations offered an abundance of remote, hidden locations for clandestine stills. The practice, too, was so widespread, and the possibilities for production so geographically massive, that the combined efforts of the Indian Police and local law enforcement could never have hoped to control it. Hidden stills cropped up in the Mission Mountains, on the eastern bounds of the Flathead Reservation, and also in the foothills of the Flathead Mountains on the remote western edge of the reservation, near small towns like Niarada, Lonepine, and Hotsprings. Liquor from the Mission Mountain stills easily made its way south toward Missoula along the service road, which by 1926, had become United States Highway 93, running from the Canadian border near Eureka, Montana, to Wells, Nevada. Liquor produced in the west could easily be trafficked along the route that today is Montana Highway 200, toward Lake Pend Oreille and Idaho. Likewise, stills appeared in the remote southwestern portion of the Nez Perce Reservation, where it could then flow north toward Lapwai and Lewiston on a route that opened as United States Highway 95 in 1926.⁵⁷

Development in Indian Country (New York: ABC-CLIO Press, 2012). Also, Donald Fixico, *American Indians in a Modern World* (New York: Rowman Altamira, 2006).

⁵⁷ An inspection report of liquor conditions on the Nez Perce Reservation from 1916, conducted by special agent O.B. Goodall, indicates the existence of hidden stills, surmised to be in the most remote parts of the

The Blackfeet Reservation emerged as an open conduit to illegal beer and spirits from Canada. It possessed a remote border with Alberta, nearly 30 miles in length, through prairie that defied adequate patrol and enforcement. The Indian Police force on the Blackfeet Reservation never consisted of more than two dozen officers relegated to patrolling on horseback, as in 1920 the agency possessed only two vehicles, and did not acquire a third until 1928. Likewise, local law enforcement was similarly spread thin. Glacier County's small sheriffs' department policed a population of only 4,178 people in 1920, and 5,297 people in 1930, but had to cover an area of 3,037 square miles, most of which included extremely remote spaces in the Blackfeet Reservation and in Glacier National Park. Complicating matters was the fact that liquor running had become a high-enough producing business to be better equipped than law enforcement. Reports from Blackfeet Agency's Law and Order Division indicate that liquor runners most frequently escaped capture simply because they possessed, better, faster, and more maneuverable vehicles than did the Indian Police.⁵⁸

The expanded marketplace for illegal liquor also undoubtedly expanded the profitably of the now-decades-old black market in western Montana and the Idaho

reservation, and very difficult to get to. The report further indicates trends of Indians themselves doing smuggling of liquor both on and off of the reservation. O.B. Goodall, "Inspection Report of Fort Lapwai Agency," October 13, 1916, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Fort Lapwai Agency, Box 11, Folder 112630-16, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, In 1920, Flathead Agency and its Superintendent, Theodore Sharp, placed requests for additional resources to hunt for stills in the Mission Mountains and the Western Bounds of the Reservation, believing they were the source of a regional bootlegging operation running liquor to the reservation and the surrounding towns. Letter: Theodore Sharp to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 15, 1920, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 25, Folder 35913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁸ The Law and Order Report from 1928, reveals that the agency needed faster vehicles to chase down bootleggers, and also need more officers. Also, complicating matters further was the fact that "the County [did] not feel like spending a great deal of money maintaining law and order among our Indians because of the fact that they are not taxpayers." F.C. Campbell, "Law and Order Report, 1928," June 30, 1928, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 9, Folder 052 Reports for 1928, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

panhandle. While positive links are difficult to fully substantiate, the degree of probability highly suggests that the bootlegging market created by general prohibition linked together with the older, more established, bootlegging operation that had surrounded the reservations prior to prohibition. And just as before, a native presence undoubtedly existed at every level of both the demand and supply sides of the exchange. Again, poor economic conditions pushed people into this market. The economic and ecological collapse of the late 1920s is less readily detectable in the region than it was in larger urban centers and in areas directly affected by the Dust Bowl, but its aftershocks, nonetheless, further destabilized what was already a fragile regional economy, for both Indians and non-Indians alike.

The agricultural economy bottomed-out in the early phases of the Great Depression thanks to market forces unleashed a decade earlier. World War I had produced a simultaneous drop in prices - due to war time measures - and increased production followed a spike in demand, running the entire system on a slim margin that depended on mass production. Productivity remained high after the war, but demand sharply decreased in the 1920s, eventually wiping out the minute differentials of profit and debt that farmers and ranchers depended upon. As the market flooded most small-time producers - which included almost everyone in western Montana and the Idaho panhandle - saw their holdings get wiped out.⁵⁹

The onset of the Depression increased a general demand for intoxicants and simultaneously expanded the opportunity for quick and easy profit. Stills, while dangerous to operate, required but a bare minimum of capital and resources to build, fuel, and maintain, and thus even a small-time operation could clear a sizeable profit. Both Indians

⁵⁹ Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Also, Earl Pomeroy, *The American Far West in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 1-115.

and non-Indians with the “know-how” or connections to manufacture or obtain intoxicants could easily support their operations even with a small circle of clientele. Risk, of course, stood as a constant deterrent, thus it likely limited smuggling to a decided minority of the region’s population. Considering, however, that demand almost certainly came from a broad majority of the region’s residents for many smugglers the potential outweighed the risks. A ready supply of would-be consumers kept competition between various suppliers to a minimum, and the grim economic conditions made the risks pale for desperate people. Thus, while large-scale, and well organized supply operations certainly existed, it is highly likely that the majority of rank-and-file bootleggers were intermittent opportunists rather than committed, organized, criminals. The enterprise could have easily enticed tenants and laborers with the promise of quick capital that could line their pockets or help them keep up with common, monthly expenses.⁶⁰

Finally in the 1930s, the Federal Government took steps to curb the developments of the 1920s. The repeal of prohibition certainly curtailed the scope of the bootlegging market in the region, and across the entire country, as it appeared operations began to return to the form in which they had existed between 1902 and 1916, meant to circumvent the bans on liquor sales to Indians that endured even after prohibition. Further steps taken in 1935, as congress motioned to approve the sale of 3.2% alcohol beverages to Indians,

⁶⁰ A report filed with the Mon. Ketcham and the BCIM by St. Ignatius’ Superior Father, A. Sullivan, S.J., is illustrative of the connection between hard-luck economic conditions and bootlegging. Fr. Sullivan claimed that a sizeable percentage of Indians who received their land patents, quickly disposed of some or all of their land. He further reports that many of the whites who came onto the reservation to lease from allottees had been run broke by bad crops caused by drought and grasshoppers. Sullivan further suspected what little money these individuals had largely ended up in gambling rings and bootlegging. Letter. Fr. A. Sullivan, S.J. to Mon. William Ketcham, January 3, 1921, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 124, Folder 23, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

seems to have further curtailed, but not squash, the black market.⁶¹ The reintroduction of legitimate commerce may have also combined with overproduction to cause the black market to largely collapse under its own weight. The expansion of illegal production during prohibition had been driven by a precipitous increase in demand from both within and without the reservations. As black market demands from white communities off the reservations dried-up and disappeared, it likely saturated the on-reservation illicit economy, forcing it to downsize and readjust. The decision by the OIA, however, to maintain a ban on most kinds of liquor sales until 1953 prevented the demand from ever entirely disappearing. Furthermore, continued poor economic conditions, regardless of the expanded opportunities provided by New Deal Programs from 1933 onward, made bootlegging a continuing source of alternative income.⁶²

The ultimate irony of bootlegging was that although it presented one of the greatest challenges to the Indian Service's administration, and though it tore at the very fabric of what "civilizers" hoped to achieve in Indian Country, it nonetheless demonstrated a remarkable adaptation of reservation communities to their changing surroundings. This almost never occurred to government agents and missionaries, because their interests laid solely in seeing "Indian progress" toward civilization develop only along desired pathways.

⁶¹ Another reason, 3.2% beer sales were approved was pressure applied by non-allotted settlers who lived on the reservation, they appear to have also been part of the driving demand for the supply of illicitly obtained alcohol, smuggled onto the reservation. See, Letter: Max Lovinger (President of the Polson Business Men's Association) to John Collier (Commissioner of Indian Affairs), June 21, 1933, Polson, Montana, Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 13175, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁶² Additionally complicating matters was the fact that the pre-existing liquor ban for Indians did not apply to "competent" individuals, and only applied to "ward" Indians. This expansion of a white liquor market on the reservation helped to make enforcement against the continuing black market exceedingly difficult. Memorandum: Charles West (Acting Secretary of the Interior) to Frank H. Cooney (Governor of Montana), September 6, 1935, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Central Classified Files, Flathead Agency, Box 26, Folder 13175, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Also, Ruth V. Robinson, "Liquor Control on the Blackfeet Reservation," April 1938, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 31, Folder 126-Liquor and Drug Traffic, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

“Progress” was measured by sedentary life, the raising of crops and cattle, and replacement of “Indian familial relations” with acceptable “American” family life. Thus, bootlegging was seen solely as crime, and not capitalism, although it demonstrated an astonishing acumen for the later among the Nez Perce, Flathead, and Blackfeet Reservations’ allottees and enrollees.

Bootlegging further demonstrated the remarkable transformation of the reservations themselves since the end of confinement in the late nineteenth century. The reservations had evolved from largely isolated economic backwaters to integrated components of a regional economy. It further demonstrated that the relationship between the reservations and the non-Indian communities that surrounded them were far from being solely extractive. Capital flowed in both directions, even if the transfer was not fully equitable - and it was not. It further demonstrated that in this emerging world, populated by Indians and Americans alike, Native People could appear in strange and unexpected places. The colonial relationship between American administrators and Indian wards, if it ever truly existed, was rapidly disintegrating. Indian agents could not be fully subjected to assigned roles, and would - of their own volition - pursue profit, pursue opportunity, and pursue power through whatever means was afforded them.

Of course, while bootlegging stood as the most virulent example of the alternative economy developing on the allotment era reservations, it stood far from being the only issue that faced the Indian Service. The 1910s and 20s saw mounting disputes between the Nez Percés, Confederated Salish and Kootenais, and Blackfeet and the states of Montana and Idaho over hunting rights. Since all three confederated nations possessed “Stevens Treaties” - that contained an irregularity for mid-nineteenth century treaties granting

hunting rights on and beyond the bounds of their reservations in perpetuity - the argument centered on whether the treaties superseded state hunting regulations. Tribal organizations argued that their treaties did overrule state law. Their arguments followed the legal precedent from the late-nineteenth that had made the Dawes Act constitutional in the first place, which established the supremacy of federal law in nearly every matter concerning the governing of Indian nations.⁶³ The Indian Service, however, proved consistently loathe to support treaty rights in the face of local law and politics, on an entire host of issues, including hunting rights.

Unsurprisingly, the fight over hunting rights coincided with increased instances of “poaching,” Native Peoples taking game animals out of season. And the growth of “illegal” hunting undoubtedly correlated to the increasingly desperate situation on the three reservations. For many people hunting likely returned as a necessary action in order to keep food on the table for themselves and their families. The near depletion of game animals on the reservations themselves, too, meant that subsistence hunting activities left the bounds of the reservations, and invited other problems between the reservation and surrounding communities, namely trespassing. The states of Montana and Idaho uniformly declared the

⁶³ *Ex Parte Crow Dog* a case from 1883, which nullified a death sentence issued by the Dakota Territorial Court on a Sioux Sub Chief, led to the passage of the Major Crimes Act in 1885, establishing federal jurisdiction in all serious and violent crimes involving native defendants. The constitutionality of this act was challenged, and upheld, in 1886 by the case of *United States v. Kagama*, deciding that a murder from the Klamath reservation in California would be tried in federal courts. Following the *Kagama* ruling, the conservative court of Supreme Court Justice Edward Douglass White further expanded congressional and federal power over the governing of Indians and Reservations, with the decisions from *United States v. Sandoval* (1913) and *United States v. Nice* (1916), which declared an absolute, plenary power of congress over “Indian wards” that superseded the power of the states. See, David Eugene Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

activity as illegal, with the support of the Indian Service; however, considering the remoteness of the region, stemming the tide of hunting was next to impossible.⁶⁴

Allotment also invited other petty crime problems that related to the poverty that allotment engendered. Rampant thievery became a serious issue for the agencies and for the towns situated on the reservations. People who lacked the means to legitimately acquire necessities found other means. The agencies often found their warehouses pilfered of supplies including grains, farming supplies and tools, alcohol, clothing, and shoes. For the most part theft problems appeared to be too widespread to be adequately enforced, and the small Indian Police forces were already taxed to their limits. Doing even less to curtail petty crime was the fact that most of the common sentences handed down by the Indian Courts for minor offenses included either short stints of jail time or assignment to work details, both of these sentences meant the perpetrator would be supplied with shelter and rations for the duration. Considering the likely causes of most crime that occurred between 1902 and 1933, such punishment would hardly have been much of a deterrent.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Among the largest of these fights would be over Blackfeet Hunting Rights in Glacier National Park, since it was once part of the Blackfeet Reservation, and also among the lands that had been guaranteed as hunting grounds in perpetuity by the treaty negotiated with Isaac Stevens in 1855. Letter: Serven, Joyce & Barlow and John G. Carter, Attorneys to Mike Little Dog, May 4, 1927, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060-Tribal Relations-1915-1934, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Letter: A. Serven to Adam Whiteman, April 11, 1927, Browning Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060-Tribal Relations -1915- 1934, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Letter: Serven, Joyce & Barlow and John G. Carter, Attorneys to Mountain Chief, March 25, 1927, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060-Tribal Relations -1915- 1934, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Letter: Serven, Joyce & Barlow and John G. Carter, Attorneys to Frank Vielle, March 25, 1927, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060-Tribal Relations -1915- 1934, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

⁶⁵ From among the 45 deaths of allottees recorded during 1927, one, died of "acute alcoholism, another five died due to gunshot wounds or other trauma caused during a criminal altercation, considering the small populations of residents on each of the reservations, the overall impact of petty and serious crime on daily life would have been quite significant. Report: "Annual Report 1927: Deaths of Indians and Causes of Death," Undated, Dixon, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 72, Folder 742-Deaths, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

The Call for Reform in Indian Country

A firm majority of the extant scholarship on the Indian New Deal, inaugurated by the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act - more famously known as the Indian Reorganization Act - in June 1934, focuses on the agency of John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and primary author of the bill. Here, the narrative places Collier and the arc of his career at the forefront of reform so necessary for the ailing conditions of most of Indian Country. According to this story, Collier arrived in the Interior Department in 1933 and inherited a deeply dysfunctional Indian Service. It was a match made in a star-crossed heaven, for Collier brought with him an insatiable appetite and incredible record for reform.⁶⁶

Indeed, Collier's personal tale is compelling. Collier was a Southerner, born in Atlanta, Georgia, who overcame a childhood of hardship. His mother died from conditions brought on by her addiction to amphetamines, and his father committed suicide shortly thereafter. Nonetheless, the driven Collier pushed on. He was educated at Columbia University, and then received graduate training in sociology from the Collège de France. Moving through the intellectual and artistic circles of New York City, he met Mabel Dodge Luhan, one of the foundational figures of the Taos Society of Artists, who brought Collier to New Mexico and first introduced Collier to American Indians.

Supposedly it was love at first sight. The Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest spoke deeply to Collier's radical sensibility. In the communitarian orientation of their "traditional" lifeways he glimpsed an alternative to the alienation of capitalism and

⁶⁶ For an overview of extant literature and debate on the Indian New Deal and Collier see, Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980). Also, Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

consumerism. The encounter, furthermore, sprung him into action, as an advocate and reformer for American Indians, and Indian policy. He saw what remained of "traditional" Indian life as being under serious threat from being overtaken by the dominant culture of the United States. His first foray into reform came in 1922, when the General Federation of Women's Clubs appointed him as chair of research for the Indian Welfare Committee, a loose association of groups that advocated the return of Indian lands lost to allotment.

A year later, with help, Collier formed the American Indian Defense Association, which brought together political and legal resources to lobby for reform, an end to allotment, and greater tribal self-governance and economic independence. Among his greatest achievements in this capacity was the protection of Navajo lands from infrastructural development, and the political pressure on Congress that resulted with the commissioning of what became the Meriam Report in 1926. Despite these successes, Collier was labeled by the Indian Service in the 1920s as an "out-there," if well intentioned, radical, who had little grasp of actual feasible policy and instead was governed solely by idealism. The toppling of the Herbert Hoover administration by the Great Depression, the election of Franklin Roosevelt, and the promise of a "New Deal," however, opened doors for Collier, who soon found himself as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Even once he possessed legitimate political authority, however, he still had many hurdles to climb. He faced a congress that was largely hostile to much of the reform he wanted to put into place. Congress was left uneasy by the idea that any proposed legislation he brought to the floor might spell an end to assimilation. And if that was the case, then what would be the logical next step in Indian governance? As a result the bill, primarily written by Collier, introduced to the Senate Floor by Montana Democrat Burton Wheeler,

and co-sponsored in the House by Nebraska Representative Edgar Howard, contained not all of what the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had envisioned, and was amended and emasculated further. Thus the shortcomings of the Indian New Deal, the fact that it helped to expand the wage economy on reservations rather than stem it, the limited power given to newly formed tribal governments and constitutions, and more, were functions of the necessary compromises made upon the bill's birth.⁶⁷

The above narrative is not untrue. Indeed, Collier probably emerged as the single most important Indian Policy reformer of his time, and he, along with his bill, attempted to bring some stability to reservations that had been thrown into chaos by allotment. It is, nonetheless, couched with some misleading emphases. For one, Collier is largely protected by the same couched terms historians have used to minimize criticism of the Roosevelt Administration and the New Deal more generally: the idea of "constraints." The failures and the shortcomings of the New Deal more broadly have often been explained away as a function of "constraints," opposition from an unwilling congress or court that stunted the scope and purpose of individual programs and reforms. Similarly, the shortcomings of the Indian New Deal, more often than not, come down to constraints. Otherwise, attention is paid to Collier's own shortcomings, such as the latent paternalism of his vision, and the limitations of the society and time in which Collier lived and worked.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980). Also, Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

⁶⁸ The "constraints" put upon the New Deal, which limited it, was an argument most famously put forward by William Leuchtenburg. See, William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: HarperCollins, 1963). Meanwhile, New Left historian Barton Bernstein argued that the New Deal worked to save the basic functions of American economics rather than replace them, See, Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (San Francisco: Chatto & Windus, 1970).

Without dismissing the validity of these interpretations, the question still must be asked, what far-reaching reform did the Indian New Deal, in fact, bring to Indian Country and to reservations like the ones occupied by the Blackfeet, the Flatheads, and the Nez Perces? On a nationwide-scale, it did, indeed, stop the bleeding as far as further Indian lands being lost to alienation and foreclosure were concerned. What else was accomplished, though? The Indian New Deal restructured tribal governments with new constitutions, but these had a limited impact on local realities. Evidence from the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce reservations seems to suggest the reforms of the 1930s built on the economies, politics, and trends of the 1920s rather than departing from them. This nonetheless opened breathing-space for the agencies to regain their equilibrium. As allotment faded away, the reservations stabilized the relationships forged between them on their surrounding communities. Reorganization coalesced around the economic order taking shape in the 1920s, one that rested on leases, ranching, and labor.

Chapter VII

Reorganization

Reorganization in the 1930s ushered in a renewed period of growing stability for Indian Country in the Northwest, as allotment and its attenuating assimilation policies were curtailed and scaled back. The Indian New Deal, put in place by John Collier and the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, is the most-thoroughly analyzed catalyst of these changes. It, by no means, however, accounted for, or stood responsible for, all of the changes occurring in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle in the mid-1930s. Thus, the term “reorganization” is meant – in this analysis – to apply more broadly than to only the reforms and changes put in place by the Indian New Deal. Rather, reorganization refers to changing, on-the-ground circumstances on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations, born both from the structural societal changes taking place in each of the reservations over a span of decades and the new reforms introduced by John Collier’s Indian Service.

Here, the full scope and intent of the Indian New Deal deserves some attention. The cornerstone of John Collier’s reforms was the Wheeler-Howard Act, more famously known as the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), signed into law June 18, 1934. Its lofty goals included the preservation of indigenous cultures from further dissolution under the pressures of allotment and acculturation, as well as the conservation of Indian resources, and particularly tribal lands, from further exploitation and destruction. In order to achieve those ends, the IRA set up provisions for the recreation of tribal governments under new constitutions. Once tribes possessed a ratified constitution, greater control would be placed

in the hands of tribes' own governing bodies on matters concerning the management of tribal resources, tribal membership, and governance of tribal jurisdictions.

The particular details of the IRA were – of course – far more complicated. The new tribal governments had to be constructed according to carefully regulated formulae. Tribal constitutions had to be made in accordance to the provisions of the IRA, and so – to a certain extent – the tribal constitutions that were made and ratified had a “cookie-cutter” quality to them, addressing the formulation of governments and councils, the separation of powers and responsibilities within those governments, and rules for tribal membership, elections, and voting. Once created, however, the new governments would see only a gradual transference of power into their hands. This feature of the IRA reflected the influence that John Collier drew from the British mandate system, and British colonial administration in Africa, wherein the empire was set up to gradually guide indigenous populations and governments toward independence and self-government.¹

Tribal participation in the Indian Reorganization Act, however, was not compulsory. In order to present the act as a significant break, both in spirit and in implementation, from allotment and the Dawes Act, new tribal constitutions needed to be approved by a general vote within the tribe before they could be considered for ratification or implemented. The voting, however, created controversy. Ultimately 172 recognized tribes fully accepted the IRA and formed new tribal constitutions, but 73 recognized nations rejected the IRA. The most famous of the dissenters was the Navajo Reservation, which has been the primary focus of the Indian New Deal's critics, which strongly opposed

¹ See, Laurence M. Hauptman, “Africa View: John Collier, the British Colonial Service and American Indian Policy, 1933-1945,” *The Historian* 29 (1986), 356-374. Also, Thomas Biolsi, *Organizing the Lakota: The Political Economy of the New Deal on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998). Also, Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980).

reorganization and branded Collier as an iron-fisted bureaucrat, no different from his predecessors. Other voting problems included the fact that abstentions were to be counted as “yes” votes, which angered many Indians across the 48 states. Furthermore, uncertainty persisted over just who, exactly, would be allowed to vote. On the checkerboarded reservations across the American West, many non-Indians and unrecognized individuals owned property within the bounds of reservations, thus their interests were deeply tied to the result of the voting on the IRA, even if they were not tribal members. Furthermore, thousands of tribal enrollees and Indian claimants owned no property whatsoever, either due to alienation of lands or the fact that they had never been allotted in the first place. A strong resistance to their being allowed to vote existed within blocs of allottees across the country.²

The Oklahoma tribes were left out of the initial Indian Reorganization Act, and ultimately reorganized under a separate bill – the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act – passed in 1936.³ Other than these major pieces of legislation, the Indian New Deal included a more general effort to soften the economic damage done by allotment. Here, Collier’s major push focused on a re-expansion of the Office of Indian Affairs’ budget, in order to expand the bureau’s ability to create infrastructure and manage the reservations, and – thereby – create wage and job opportunities for the people living under the power and jurisdiction of the agencies. By the time Collier took office in 1933 the Office of Indian Affairs’ budget stood at \$23 million. By the end of the decade, Collier expanded appropriations for the Office of Indian Affairs to \$38 million. Additionally, Collier worked with Harold Ickes, the

² Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1980), 92-118. Also, Donald Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

³ Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma’s Indian New Deal* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

Secretary of the Interior and director of Public Works Administration, to bring additional New Deal investment and programs onto Indian reservations, in order to bolster employment and also repair and modernize the crumbling OIA infrastructure on many reservations across the American West.⁴

Lastly, Collier's administration reshaped the Office of Indian Affairs' ethos and approach toward "traditional" native spirituality and culture. Many of Collier's views on these matters stemmed from his own idealized and romanticized encounters with southwestern natives, but these views, nonetheless, prompted him to try and greatly reform the OIA's approach to "Indian tribalism." Standard practice for many Indian agencies throughout the allotment era had been to greatly discourage, or even place outright bans on traditional dances and rituals – the Ghost Dance phenomenon being the most famous example – and other spiritual practices that included traditional forms of mysticism and, or, hallucinogenic trances. By and large, these bans had been supported by Christian missionaries of all stripes, who viewed such practices as pagan and otherwise disruptive to their missionary goals. Rather than viewing the change in policy as a hostile action toward missionaries, however, Collier defended the change in policy as an extension of the constitutional rights to freedom of religion to Native Peoples.⁵

When assessing the Indian New Deal in operation in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, however, it quickly becomes difficult to discern the impact of Collier's reforms from broader and longer-term adaptations that had been organically taking place

⁴ Kenneth R. Philip, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1977).

⁵ Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1980), 167. Also, John Collier, "The Policy of the Office of Indian Affairs on Religious Liberty among Indians," February 19, 1936, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

for the larger part of two decades. This is why “reorganization” in the 1930s Northwest encompassed more than just the reforms within the Office of Indian Affairs. The emergent stability of the 1930s, instead, laid in a combination of new reforms, and older processes already underway in the 1920s. As jarring as allotment had been, to a great extent, reservation communities were already, of their own accord, adjusting and re-striking a delicate economic and social balance even before the Indian New Deal became reality. The expansion of leasing practices, for example, demonstrated well the onset of a new and integrated economic and social status quo. The implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act and other facets of the Indian New Deal in the Northwest helped to further institutionalize the modern, integrated, and heterogeneous reality appearing on the twentieth-century reservations of the Northwest. By no means, however, was the Indian New Deal an absolute prerequisite for the situation taking shape in the 1930s.

Further calling to question the specific impacts of the Indian New Deal are the very different ways in which it was received by the tribes of the Northwest. Although the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces all negotiated their ways through the Indian New Deal by different means, all three confederated nations and reservations nonetheless experienced similar patterns of returning stability in the mid-1930s, wherein each community settled into a status quo where they shared a racially, ethnically, and culturally heterogeneous space with many different people, and where the substance of their daily lives continued to blend and mesh together with the influences of Americans and the Catholic Church. In 1935, the Confederated Salish and Kootenais received the very first ratified IRA constitution. Likewise the Blackfeet very quickly accepted the IRA and created a constitution and bylaws in 1935. On the other end of the spectrum, however, the

Nez Perces were unable to ever create an IRA constitution that could garner the necessary amount of votes to be passed. While the Nez Perces never outright rejected the IRA like the Navajos and other nations that resisted reorganization, they still failed to become full participants in its provisions.

Regardless of each tribe's status within the IRA, however, similar general trends developed. Even as each reservation community sought economic assistance, they simultaneously reaffirmed relationships and commitments to Catholics and to other non-Indians who had moved onto the reservations and into their cultures and economies. None of the three reservation communities ever expressed interest in gaining the sovereign power to break ties with the newcomers brought to Indian Country in previous decades. The growing and evolving relationship between tribal members, OIA officials, and the Catholic Church on the three reservations perhaps best demonstrated the spirit and operation of the Indian New Deal and reorganization in the Northwest, as these relationships came to be fundamentally characterized by compromise and adaptation. These relationships, furthermore, demonstrated the gaps between expectation and reality concerning the Indian New Deal's implementation, and also exposed the ways in which the Indian New Deal built upon the changes of the 1920s rather than initiating path breaking reform.

The defense and empowerment of tribal rights for freedom of conscience, and for the practice of "traditional religion," considered a major achievement of Indian New Deal, seemed to have a limited scope of impact. At least in theory, the decision by Collier to "roll-back" the assault on tribal spiritual practices that had been the law-of-the-land for the previous half-century posed an existential threat to Christian and Catholic Missions. Conceivably, Native Peoples who were dissatisfied with the Christianization of their lives

now had other open and accessible alternatives. Thus in historical interpretation, the Indian New Deal has often been associated with the decline of Indian mission efforts across the United States. On the surface, this insight is not entirely untrue. Over the course of the Indian New Deal, the campuses of St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, Holy Family, and countless other missions spread across the United States, became hollowed-out husks of their former selves. Many of the dormitories, residences, plants, and other infrastructure erected following the Peace Policy and in the early phases of allotment faded away. Upon closer examination, however, we see that the relationship between the Indian New Deal and the missions' "decline" is coincidental rather than correlative. As has been shown, the Catholic Indian Missions were already in dire financial straits in the 1920s, and their economic condition only worsened as the Great Depression deepened and the wells of donated capital dried.⁶

People, however, did not flock away from the Catholic communities that had already been established. The parishes attached to the missions remained as viable as they had ever been. Church attendance at the missions, by all indications, mirrored or even exceeded national trends through the 1930s and into the era of World War II. The Catholic communities held together, even as the missions dissipated, in no small part because Native Peoples had already adapted and co-opted Catholicism and Christianization on their own terms. By the third decade of the twentieth century Catholicism was no longer so foreign and removed from "traditional" spiritual practice. So even as the Indian New Deal

⁶ Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1980), 167. Also, John Collier, "The Policy of the Office of Indian Affairs on Religious Liberty among Indians," February 19, 1936, Washington, D.C., Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

extended freedom of conscious to the Native Peoples of the Northwest, it did not prompt them to exercise that freedom by abandoning the Catholic Church.⁷

Even more broadly, the reorganization era provided a capstone to the processes of syncretism and adaptation initiated in the Northwest during the middle of the nineteenth century, at the dawn of the reservation period. More important than the changes enacted within the reservations – which at times could be minimal or otherwise difficult to detect – reorganization changed the Office of Indian Affairs, making it more flexible and better equipped to engage with the heterogeneous and complex institutions that the reservations had become, due to decades of non-Indian migration onto the reservations, decades of intermarriage, and decades of religious conversion and culture change.

The Outward Structure of Reorganization and Recovery

In many ways, Indian New Deal administrative reforms and economic relief efforts continued and expanded upon administrative trends that were already present on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservation in the later phases of the allotment era. Quickly panning back over the macro-scale structural developments in the region since the signing of the Stevens Treaties, the primary intention of the Indian Service had been to wean the peoples confederated onto the three reservations from a reliance on annuities and rations - first instituted as compensation for lost land. Within this organizational philosophy, allotment had been designed to direct people toward avenues of self-support, primarily farming, while the Indian Service managed other tribal resources - in Indians' interest - to fund and support development with infrastructure. The failure and collapse of

⁷ An overview of church participation patterns through the period in question, see, William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Katherine Meyer, *American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 51-68. Also, Christopher Vecsey, *Where Two Roads Meet* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

this system, which caused the alienation of hundreds-of-thousands of acres of tribal land, forced agents and agencies into improvised solutions, and primarily an expansion in the availability of both temporary and permanent wage labor opportunities. And, for the most part, the Indian New Deal followed on this precedent. Among the largest concerns were the young and idle men who congregated in the towns with little else to do. Numerous programs became stop-gap measures, designed to get people to work immediately, even if it was only a short term solution.⁸

The two largest safety nets for people who had lost their lands to alienation, or who could not support their allotments still held in trust or under fee status became the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, Indian Division (CCC-ID). In particular, the CCC-ID, which existed from 1933 to 1942, employed, at its peak, roughly 15,000 individuals, from a total population of roughly 330,000 American Indians living across the country, and possessed a work quota for about 1,200 individuals upon its creation in 1933. Dam construction along major rivers and other infrastructure projects at least temporarily employed large numbers of individuals. Perhaps more importantly, the WPA proved able to bridge funding gaps on reservations caused by the depression. For example, in 1936, the WPA re-opened the Polson hydroelectric project on the Flathead Reservation, after it had closed in 1931 due to a lack of resources. The project employed

⁸ The ideology of allotment, see, Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Also, Publication of the Meriam Report produced both a reaction to the disasters unleashed by allotment, but also revealed an effort by the agencies to adjust to the failure of farming by expanding wage labor opportunities both through the agencies themselves, and through other means like public works projects. See, Lewis Meriam, et. al., *The Problem of Indian Administration: Report of a Survey Made at the Request of Honorable Hubert Work, and Submitted to Him, February 21, 1928* (The "Meriam" Report) (Washington, D.C.: The Department of the Interior, 1928).

250 members of the Confederated Salish Kootenai Nation, from a total enrollment of about 3,100, until it was completed in 1938.⁹

The impact of programs like the CCC-ID and the Polson hydroelectric project proved a mixed bag. On the one hand, they produced a cascade of positive results. They could quickly infuse much needed capital into quite desperate local economies. Furthermore, CCC-ID opportunities and other projects expanded wage opportunities in markets that possessed a horrendous shortage of decent paying jobs. Yet, while these projects offered relief above and beyond the opportunities that could be given by the agencies themselves, they did nothing to relieve many people's reliance on temporary work. Furthermore, in certain ways, job relief programs also contradicted other goals of the Indian New Deal. For example, in spite of the reforms put in place by the IRA and other changes implemented within the Indian Service by Collier, the OIA never departed from the basic goal of supporting private property ownership and agrarian development as the basic model of Indian economic independence.

To a certain extent, Collier had hoped to curtail the expansion of the wage economy and, instead, support more traditional forms of economic production, based in arts, herding, and farming. In the Northwest though, the Indian New Deal expanded reliance on the wage economy. "When depression struck with its dry years and low prices," one report from Flathead read, "many [native people] abandoned their small farms and sought employment in our CCC-ID camps or on WPA and many of them have now

⁹ Untitled Document on Indian Reorganization, Undated, Records Group 75, Flathead Agency, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 24, Folder 063 - Enrollment, Citizenship, Degree of Indian Blood, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

become wage-minded.”¹⁰ The incorporation of the Flatheads and the Blackfeet by the IRA also helped put them further in debt. Among the many rights conferred to the incorporated tribal councils was the ability to borrow money from the federal government, and then, in turn, lend that money to individual enrollees. The expanded availability of debt in local economies already steeped in it, however, produced few positive results. For the most part all it established was a financial vortex that forced tribes to expend the material leases in their remaining tribal lands to satisfy debts. Disbursements given out to tribal enrollees for the sale of timber and other natural resources often ended up paying debts owed to the federal government. While the IRA had put a stop to the further allotting and alienation of lands, it had not capped the flow of capital and resources out of Indian Country, nor had it entirely curtailed an unsustainable economic relationship between Indian reservations and the rest of the United States, predicated on sale of limited and exhaustible assets.¹¹

More than anything else, the economic trends of the mid-1930s expanded a process that was already underway, wherein many enrollees were abandoning their allotments as a source of income and instead turning to a wage economy, that – by the 30s – was at least producing greater opportunities than it had through the decade of the twenties. It further demonstrated a continuing integration of the reservations into broader regional markets and economies. Furthermore, hydroelectric dams and the construction of other infrastructure further modernized the reservations of Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle,

¹⁰ Untitled Document on Indian Reorganization, Undated, Records Group 75, Flathead Agency, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 24, Folder 063 - Enrollment, Citizenship, Degree of Indian Blood, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

¹¹ Coming out of the Indian New Deal Era was a continued crisis in the management of tribal resources, made worse by the ability - later on - of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' and the Federal Government's ability to terminate timber lands and other natural resources. Dire economic conditions placed tribes - like the Blackfeet, who owned oil resources - in a difficult position, all but forced to sell resources, and take loans for development, in order to keep their local economies afloat. See, Donald L. Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2011). Also, Paul C. Rosier, *The Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation, 1921-1954* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 130-169.

expanding the availability of modern conveniences – like electricity – and improving the rural infrastructure of the reservations and the surrounding counties alike.

The Indian New Deal and Non-Indians

When John Collier first came into office, it cast a considerable shadow of uncertainty over the future of leasing, land sales, and other processes that had brought non-Indians into Indian Country. Whites who had entered the reservation by way of leasing, in particular, received the news reorganization with a great amount of trepidation. Among this group, very few clearly understood the ultimate impact that the Wheeler-Howard Act would have on their lives and livelihoods as it passed through drafting, and then through the houses of the legislature, and even after it passed. A report from the Blackfeet Reservation indicates that a great majority of the non-Indians who possessed leases and grazing permits for their cattle on the reservation were panicked by the prospect of reform. “One quite general idea,” the report indicated, “is that white interests (grazing and otherwise) are to be driven off at once.”¹²

The leading reasons for these fears centered on spiraling rumors and misinformation, and a general confusion, about what new tribal corporations, charters, and general OIA reforms would and could do. Speculation ranged from the idea that tribal councils would play small and perfunctory rolls to beliefs that the new governments would be given complete managerial control over their reservations and even government employees. Apart from that, it appears, many whites completely misunderstood or could

¹² Letter: Warren O’Hara to John Collier, December 6, 1934, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 5, Folder 021 Indian Reorganization Act, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

not fathom what tribal leaders intended to do with whatever power was ultimately vested in them.¹³

While the Blackfeet, Nez Perces, and Confederated Salish and Kootenais most certainly wanted to utilize the act to recover alienated lands and return property to tribal status – a function of the IRA not dependent on the creation of a constitution – and most certainly wanted greater self-control over their resources and the management of their property, they never showed any concerted interest in “rolling back the clock” and removing from the reservations all of the various and diverse people who had entered their communities and economies over the previous decades. Their actions demonstrated a clear cognizance of the relationship between their reservations and the communities in Montana and Idaho that surrounded them, and of the relationship between the tribal enrollees and the non-Indians who conducted their lives and their business in Indian Country. On the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, the Indian New Deal became an affirmation of the forces shaping Indian Country and the people residing within it.

A council convened April 14, 1934, at St. Ignatius, Montana, in which the Flathead Council, headed by Joseph Blodgett, Albert Lemery, and Roy Courville, fielded questions from whites and other non-allottees concerning reorganization, offers a window into the mentalities with which the Indian New Deal was greeted. Among the primary concerns held by non-Indians focused on the fate of purchased or alienated lands, and the continuation of the leasing system, both of which had become ingrained components of the

¹³ Letter: Warren O'Hara to John Collier, December 6, 1934, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 5, Folder 021 Indian Reorganization Act, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Confederated Flathead Tribes of Indians,” April 14, 1934, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Box 143, Folder Council of Flathead Indians - Minutes, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

region's agricultural economy. Blodgett, however, quickly moved to soothe these fears. He admitted, that, indeed, opinion among potential Salish and Kootenai leaders, once a charter was given and government was elected, heavily favored using appropriations and tribal funds to recover lost lands. The Salish and Kootenais held neither the power nor the interest, though, to compel non-Indians or Indian private land holders into sale, and all land offers were to be made at fair market prices. The council, furthermore, expressed every intention to allow allottees to continue to lease their lands, and to continue to allow those whose lands were still held in trust to remain there. The only change to the existing structure would be for allottees who wished to sell part or all of their holdings. Now they could only sell them to the tribe, so as to prevent further land loss.¹⁴

The mood from this council, and on the other reservations, following the enactment of Indian Reorganization maintained that newfangled tribal governance was to be predicated on a recognition of the rights of everyone who now lived in Indian Country. Such sentiments stemmed from a vague and indefinable ideology welling-up within the tribal communities that the most necessary reform was a reassertion of tribal rights against the excesses of allotment, without necessarily going so far as to deny the rights of numerous peoples who had become part of the fabric of Indian Country. It was an assertion that tribal and treaty rights could, in fact, coexist with private and property rights. It was an ideology that appeared to be entirely unanticipated by whites, considering the rampant fears about land loss that circulated prior to reorganization's enactment. It was also an

¹⁴ "Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Confederated Flathead Tribes of Indians," April 14, 1934, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Box 143, Folder Council of Flathead Indians - Minutes, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

ideology that appears to have originated organically from within the Indian communities themselves, rather than coming from a top-down source.¹⁵

The mood of tribal communities in the Northwest seems, too, to have completely escaped the notice of the IRA's most ardent federal critics, who decried Collier and his proposed legislation as a rejection of the goals of assimilation and a return to "tribalism." At least as far as the Northwest was concerned, such fears appeared to be as unfounded as the fears of private farmers and ranchers. If the IRA governments and reforms of the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Blackfeet Reservations constituted a return to tribalism, then it was a new form tribal identity and politics, and one that contained numerous ties and parallels to the American legal, social, cultural, and economic structures that Indian peoples had been negotiating with for a century. The express goals of the new tribal institutions – even for reservations such as Lapwai, which did not create a constitution, but still formed business councils and other new government arms - were to prevent further losses, but also to negotiate and maintain compromises with the various people with whom they coexisted. The goal was to strengthen Native Peoples' political voice within the contexts where they already existed, not to overturn the status quo.¹⁶

After decades of turmoil and upheaval, it appeared that - finally - the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, along with other communities spread through the American West were headed toward a calmer and more peaceful stasis. Reorganization's

¹⁵ Even prior to the Flathead Council a large, regional, question and answer session about Indian Reorganization had been held in Portland, Oregon. Across the entirety of the United States, similar meetings were held concerning the prospect of organization. "Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Confederated Flathead Tribes of Indians," April 14, 1934, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-327, Box 143, Folder Council of Flathead Indians - Minutes, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

¹⁶ A snapshot of the mood in the Northwest on the eve of the Indian New Deal reveals a general desire to gain greater control over tribal land and resources, and to prevent further disintegration. See, Paul C. Rosier, *The Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation, 1921-1954* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 13-100.

exact role in this process is one which is difficult to nail down. The realities of a checkerboarded Indian Country, where non-Indians lived amongst the confederated nations, leased properties from them, farmed and ranched alongside them, and shared most aspects of their public lives were being negotiated long before changes occurred in Washington, D.C. Even, then, despite the ideas that went behind reorganization, its implementation at the local level was a decided continuation of legal and economic trends already well underway. Allotment's failure to promote tribal economic self-reliance was already a given, and an accepted reality for almost everyone who was involved. Organically, and on their own, the agencies and the people who lived in the communities that surrounded them moved towards alternatives.

Poverty remained an unsolved and pernicious problem, but not simply due to Indian Service policy. As the reservations turned over into the early 1930s the deepening Great Depression made poverty a pervasive problem throughout the country, and the American West. So too, did the order that was coalescing prior to and during reorganization produce its fair share discontents. Money promised for economic recovery, to be appropriated to the agencies or brought from outside projects administered by the WPA, never seemed to arrive quickly enough, or in great enough quantities. Proposals for building contracts that would bring in dollars and employment opportunities were sometimes left half-done. Furthermore, only a few short years into reorganization, the IRA had produced a considerable deal of consternation within the councils of the Flatheads and Blackfeet about

the pace of self-determination, and among the Nez Perces on whether they would receive greater latitude to manage their own affairs.¹⁷

A coherent rejection, however, of the migrations and intrusions of non-Indians into the tribal domains, however, never materialized in any meaningful sense. Part of this stemmed, most likely, from economic expedience. The lease fees and other sources of income derived from non-Indians who had set up their agricultural operations within the bounds of the reservations had become an indispensable life-line. For many, the income derived from their leasing of property was their only steady source of income in a marketplace that was in constant turmoil and bereft of much opportunity. On a more profound level, perhaps, the faces of the tribes themselves had drastically changed. The intersections and connections between their own communities and the ones that existed beyond their bounds ran too deep and were too intertwined to be untangled due to generations of intermarriage and coexistence, cultural adaptation and mixing. The missions probably best demonstrated the syncretistic realities of the new Indian Country. While the communities remained decidedly native in their orientation, incorporating elements from a deeper shared history and culture, they stood fused together with numerous outside influences. The era of reorganization presented both a reality and a history of a century of coexistence, full of its tragedies and its dislocations, but equally marked by a century of contact, growth, and evolution.

¹⁷ Memorandum: K.W. Bergan to Joseph Brown, February 10, 1937, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 12, Folder Tribal Relations, 1937, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

The Indian New Deal and the Missions

Collier's administration and the Indian New Deal never amounted to a focused hostility against missionary efforts, like some feared they would. Protecting freedom of conscience, Collier insisted, amounted to the full extent of his legal, and constitutional defense of tribal spiritual practices. Missionaries, and particularly Protestants, cried foul, nonetheless, and accused Collier's Indian Service of an elitist secularism poised to undo the progress of Christianity made among Indians since the middle of the nineteenth century. Much of the vitriol raised against him came in form of personal attacks, such as insinuations about his affinity for "tribal cultism," mixed with aspersions cast on his "egg-headed" and academic approach to bureaucratic administration, his secularism, and his "pro-tribal" and communitarian politics that made him anti-assimilationist, anti-Christian, and even anti-American, or perhaps communist.¹⁸

Many of the hard feelings that Collier engendered among Protestants came from the fact that, perhaps for the first time since the administration of Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Collier proved to be unwilling to place the resources of the Indian Service's schools and other infrastructure into the hands of missionaries and ministers to the same degree to which they were accustomed. The Indian Service of the Progressive Era and 1920s - under the direction of a string of staunch assimilationists and defenders of allotment - Cato Sells from 1913 to 1921, Charles Henry Burke from 1921 to 1929, and Charles James Roads from 1929 to 1933 - had given Protestant ministers a blank check to use the service schools

¹⁸ Accusations about Collier's intentions on religious matters prompted Collier into a written response, sent in 1936, to be published in tribal newspapers in Oklahoma and on reservations. See, Letter: John Collier to Ben Dwight, ed., the Tushkahomman, February 19, 1936, Stroud Oklahoma, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS - 075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060 Tribal Relations, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. See Also, David W. Daily, *Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade Against John Collier* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

and reservation public schools as arenas of proselytization. If any enforcement of a separation between church and state happened at all, it came from individual agents and agencies and such intervention appears to have been exceedingly rare.¹⁹

In the earliest days of his administration, however, Collier issued a number of circulars commanding the agencies and sub-agencies to fall in line and protect “the fullest constitutional liberty, in all matters affecting religion, conscience and culture... for all Indians.”²⁰ The instructions and guidelines included ordered that, while missionaries could indeed be given access to schools, it could only be given on a voluntary basis, with the consent of parents and legal guardians of the attendees. Thus if enrolled parents wanted their children withheld from bible studies, lectures, sermons, and other religious exercises performed by missionaries in the government schools, they had the right to do so. Beyond that, Collier commanded that bible study, ethics teaching, or any other strictly “evangelical” religious material was to be struck and barred from the common curriculum of government funded schools. The change in enforcement posed a serious threat, particularly to Protestant mission efforts, that for more than two decades had relied greatly upon embedding informal “missionaries” within the staffs of the Indian Service schools, and utilizing Indian Service school rooms as an evangelical resource.²¹

¹⁹ David W. Daily, *Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade Against John Collier* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

²⁰ Letter: John Collier to Ben Dwight, ed., the Tushkahomman, February 19, 1936, Stroud Oklahoma, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS -075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060 Tribal Relations, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

²¹ Letter: John Collier to Ben Dwight, ed., the Tushkahomman, February 19, 1936, Stroud Oklahoma, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS -075-96-133, Box 12, Folder 060 Tribal Relations, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, Letter: Egon E. Mallman, S.J., to Miss Victory, June 7, 1935, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Also, Letter: Fr. J.B. Tennelly, S.J., to Fr. Ignatius Dumbleck, S.J., July 5, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Catholics, and specifically the Catholics on the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, on the other hand, seemed welcoming to Collier's tone and intentions, not in the least because it was leveling the playing field. Fr. Cataldo, and his successor at St. Joseph's, Fr. Boll, to go along with Fr. Louis Taelman, who became the Superior Father of St. Ignatius in the 1920s, and Fr. Joseph Bruckert and Fr. Ignatius Dumbeck at Holy Family Mission, had long complained to the Indian Service, through the aegis of the BCIM, about an unfair level of access to the public schools given to Protestant missionaries. The Catholic community on the three reservations spread beyond the apparatus of the missions and the mission schools, and Catholic children and families attended and made use of the government schools. The BCIM alleged that Catholic Indian children were being made to attend Protestant bible sessions. Catholics, furthermore, were frequently denied access to the schools at Heart Butte, Browning, Cut Bank, Camas Prairie, Polson, Lapwai, Kamiah, and elsewhere, even though they claimed that reservation Catholics had requested their students and families be given an alternative to Protestant evangelizing.²²

From a Catholic perspective, it simply appeared that Collier's reforms would force Protestants to play by the same set of rules that Catholics had been forced to adjust to decades earlier. Access to students in the public school system would be difficult for missionary organizations, period, which for the priests and sisters administering St. Ignatius, St. Joseph's, and Holy Family was a set of circumstances that was less than ideal, but still preferable to a virtual "Protestant closed shop." Despite some of the ruminations

²² Letter: Fr. J. Bruckert, S.J., to Mons. William Ketcham, January 17, 1907, Browning, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 57, Folder 11, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Joseph Cataldo, S.J., to Charles Lusk, January 25, 1923, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 136, Folder 20, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee WI. Letter: A. Sullivan, S.J. to Mons. William Hughes, November 12, 1923, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 136, Folder 25, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

and fears of missionaries that Collier was a “bleeding heart” sympathizer to Indian traditionalists and anti-Christians, his administration quickly proved that it had no interest in interrupting or interfering with the work of the private mission schools. As far as the Indian Service was concerned, enrollment in a religious school was tantamount to consent. While the Meriam Report had heightened official concerns about degrading infrastructure and health conditions in both government and religious facilities, and in turn, reinforced a need to regulate and inspect the facilities of the missions alongside those of the government institutions, no effort was ever made to influence or apply the content of curriculum or religious instruction to a secular standard. With virtual unanimity across the three missions, the Indian New Deal maintained business as usual, and most Catholic concerns about Collier quickly dissipated.²³

The only real sticking issues, as far as the Catholic missions were concerned, were questions concerning the ersatz voucher system that existed to some extent across the three reservations, and concerning the wards that had been put under the missions’ charge. Cases of individual enrollees obtaining tribal funds to pay Catholic school tuitions had always been non-uniform, and seemingly based in a case-by-case relationship between tribal members and the agency. Not every enrollee who ever requested funds for Catholic school tuition received their wish. Beyond that, some who were granted “vouchers” for a time had them revoked later, either due to budget shortfalls - which were exceedingly common - or changing attitudes about granting vouchers within the individual agency. Since the practice was never standardized, it never really materialized at the upper levels of the Indian Service as a seriously debatable issue. On the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce

²³ David W. Daily, *Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade Against John Collier* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 60-79.

Reservations, “vouchers” eventually all-but disappeared not due to a concerted effort to stamp them out, but rather due to a restructuring of the financial relationships on the reservations between the tribe, the agencies, and the missions, which saw a greater commitment of tribal funds, granted with tribal consent, to make up for shortages in Catholic resources.²⁴

The same can be said for orphans, and other “special needs” charges often boarded at the three missions. Cases where Catholic mission boardees either had no parents or legal guardian, or where guardians were deemed unfit to give consent, posed a potential legal problem, considering Collier’s firm stance disallowing missionaries of all stripes to unlimited influence over tribal enrollees’ religious practices. On the Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce Reservations, however, there existed an equally vexing practical problem, that most of these minors in special circumstances had been boarded with the Catholic Missions and other religious institutions simply because the government lacked the resources to take these children into custody themselves. The legal “work-around” that quickly emerged again, however, was to place the question of consent into the hands of the tribal councils. It would be up to the tribes’ own authorities, as to whether or not they chose

²⁴ The years of 1934-1936 found an increasingly stable arrangement between St. Josephs, St. Ignatius, and Holy Family, and their respective tribes and agencies. These included annual disbursements for the cost of boarding students, along with a “per-head” rate covering the costs of boarding orphans and other special cases, paid out from tribal monies to the individual missions. “St. Ignatius Mission, 1934,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “St. Ignatius Mission, 1935,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “St. Ignatius Mission, 1936,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 11, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “St. Joseph’s Mission, 1934,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 2, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “St. Joseph’s Mission, 1935,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “St. Joseph’s Mission, 1936,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 5, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “Holy Family Mission, 1934,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. “Holy Family Mission, 1935,” Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

to finance the cost of boarding, caring for, and educating the children placed in the charge of the missions.²⁵

Catholic clergy thus quickly sensed a changing dynamic between themselves and the tribes that had been “in their spiritual care” for nearly a century. For decades the missions, through the BCIM and other national organizations, had been funneling money and resources from around the country into the reservations, for the sake of Catholicizing, educating, and “uplifting” the peoples of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot Nations. By the mid-1930s, responsibility was now quickly shifting onto the shoulders of their laity itself to continue the missions of now-legendary Catholic “pioneers” like Pierre-Jean De Smet, Joseph Cataldo, Nicolas Point, and Adrian Hoecken. Whether the tribes would be willing to shoulder that burden was not a forgone conclusion. For the very first time, at least since the mid-nineteenth century when the tribes possessed the independence and the power to have forcefully ejected the missionaries from the presence, had they chose to do so, their commitment to the missions, the clergy, and to the influence of Catholicism in general was being put to the test.

As such, the Catholic Church on the reservations found itself on uncomfortably paradoxical ground as Indian reorganization became a reality in the early 1930s. Yet, despite all fears, the communities that Catholics had built around their missions appeared to be at or reaching the apex of their strength, and – for the most part – affirmed their commitment to the Catholic Church and acknowledged the value of the missions’ presence. Yet, at the same time, the material and financial conditions of the missions remained

²⁵ “Catholic Mission,” Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 80, Folder 803.6, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, “Jesuit Fathers’ School,” Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 73, Folder 800, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

decaying and weak, and the needs of the full mission infrastructure could often exceed the means of their local communities. Catholics living on the reservations did what they could to support the church in the face of declining disbursements from the Indian Mission Fund, and other monies tied to the BCIM or Katharine Drexel, but even then there were limits to what these impoverished communities could accomplish without outside support.

The scope of the Catholic community on the Flathead Reservation, where missionary presence had gone unabated since the very origins of the reservation, stood as the region's most astounding success, where from a pool of just over 3,100 enrollees, the church had a regular participatory community of several hundred, and a firm majority of the reservation at least identified as Catholic. Several major events in the early 1930s clearly and visibly demonstrated the extent of the community. The first of these occurred in 1932, with the passing of two matriarchs of two of the reservation's most prominent Métis families, the Pablos and Morrigiaus. Agate Pablo, born in 1850, was the widow of Michel Pablo, and had been well-loved at the mission, and credited by the Priests for bringing her large family to the Catholic Church. Rosalie Morrigieu, the widow of Joseph Morrigieu, had been born in 1837. She raised a family of 12 children, five of whom still lived, and three of whom were then over 70 years old themselves. Describing her memorial in a letter to Mons. Hughes, Fr. Taelman, the superintendent of St. Ignatius, wrote,

At her beautiful funeral in our large church, 5 generations were present, the number of her descendants and relatives running up to considerably over 100. To all of these, the catholic faith she so well loved and practiced to the end, has been transmitted for the spreading of Christ's kingdom on earth.²⁶

²⁶ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J. to Mons. William Hughes, November 7, 1932, St. Ignatius Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 207, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

The two, along with the rest of the Catholic deceased on the reservation were honored again in a massive All Souls Day Mass, given by Fr. Taelman, in which “Indians from every district of the reservation, some having to travel 20 or 30 or even 40 miles” were in attendance.²⁷

It was surely edifying to see them receive Holy Communion in large numbers and hear them recite the beads and sing their famous religious hymns for their beloved dead. To us this has become the usual scene and though edifying, as I have said, does not make any special impression.²⁸

The regular Catholic community and church attendance both at the main parish in St. Ignatius and at the satellite mission in Polson, despite the hardship of the early 30s appeared both healthy and strong. In 1933, the Helena Diocese, having recently split from a new diocese established for Western Montana in Great Falls, installed a new Bishop, Rev. Ralph L. Hayes, D.D, initially ordained in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and serving as the diocesan superintendent of schools. Representing the Catholic Indians of the diocese at the Bishop’s installation were Chiefs Martin Charlo of the Flatheads and Andrew Bullhead of the Kalispels, along with Sam Choate, the chosen representative of the Blackfeet Nation. They arrived in “full Indian regalia,” and were given places of honor within the Cathedral in Helena. The party was then brought to a ceremony on the campus of Carroll College, and invited to speak. Martin Charlo - who was 77 years-old in 1933 - recounted his family heritage, his father was Chief Charlot of the Bitterroot Flatheads, who, though embittered by the sale of his land, had late in life returned to trusting Catholics and their faith. Martin Charlo’s, grandfather, furthermore, had been Chief Victor, the first head chief of the

²⁷ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J. to Mons. William Hughes, November 7, 1932, St. Ignatius Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 207, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

²⁸ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J. to Mons. William Hughes, November 7, 1932, St. Ignatius Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 207, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Flatheads, who had met and been baptized by Pierre Jean De Smet in 1841. Martin Charlo represented the third generation of Flathead Catholics, and there were generations yet younger than he; “We are Indians and you are white people, but by baptism we are all the same children of God,” he declared.²⁹ Andrew Bullhead then welcomed the bishop on behalf of the Kalispels, and said, “We, Indians, are poor, but the Bishop has come and he brings us God; and we are rich and rejoice today.”³⁰ The Bishop then embraced the representatives of the two tribes and, according to Fr. Taelman, was moved by the “profound impression made on him by his Indian friends and children, touched as he was by their deep and simple faith.”³¹

The celebration of Fr. Louis Taelman’s Golden Jubilee, in 1935, again demonstrated the wide spread of Catholic identity on the Flathead Reservation. The celebration turned into an impromptu, three day exposition of the intertwining of Flathead, Kalispel, and Catholic cultures and lifeways. The celebrations included keynote addresses from a host of dignitaries and important figures, including the chiefs of the Flatheads and Kalispels, members of the tribal council, the Governor of Montana, Frank Cooney, and Montana Senator James E. Murray, who carried with him a message from John Collier. The content of the messages celebrated Taelman’s work, but frequently emphasized the growing bonds of faith that tied together the reservation, the diocese, and the state. Each day featured a long horse parade of Flatheads and Kalispels, which concluded with the two

²⁹ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J., to the Indian Sentinel, October 16, 1933, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 215, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

³⁰ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J., to the Indian Sentinel, October 16, 1933, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 215, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

³¹ Letter: Fr. L. Taelman, S.J., to the Indian Sentinel, October 16, 1933, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 215, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

hours of “Indian war dances” honoring Taelman and the mission. The events were capped each day by a “Solemn High Mass.” On the first day:

[Mass was held with] a congregation of over 1000 people Indian and White, which taxed the large Mission church to its utmost capacity. Very many people were unable to enter... [then like the] Good Friday evening devotions, carried on here annually, being the way of the Cross in English and [Salish] followed by the outdoor torchlight nocturnal procession, called the “Burial of Our Lord”; during which 1000 Indians, devoutly marching between the flaming pyres all along the line, vociferously sang their famous Passion song in honor of Christ the Saviour [sic].³²

The second day:

...witnessed the Solemn High Mass of Requiem for the departed Indian Missionaries and the departed Indians. Devotion to the Holy Souls is truly characteristic of our Flathead Indians. And for them no Jubilee would have been complete without Holy Mass for the dead. After the Mass, the Indians repeated in chorus their famous Passion song, giving forcibly expression of their love for their departed ones.³³

The final day saw another High Mass, concluded with a lavish parade, in which the priests claimed that 15,000 Indians and whites from around the area stood in attendance. The jubilee concluded with another dance, given in honor of Taelman, and the missionaries of St. Ignatius.³⁴

The whole affair, demonstrated clearly the power of the Catholic community, and Catholic identity on the reservation. Indeed, by the mid-1930s, Catholics had only failed to make significant inroads among the Kootenais, whose communities remained mostly centered on the northern arm of the reservation, toward Dayton, and west of Polson.

³² Memorandum: “Father Taelman Golden Jubilee, September 27,28, and 29,” September 1935, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

³³ Memorandum: “Father Taelman Golden Jubilee, September 27,28, and 29,” September 1935, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

³⁴ Memorandum: “Father Taelman Golden Jubilee, September 27,28, and 29,” September 1935, St. Ignatius, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Among the Kalispels and Flatheads, however, the Catholic's had cultivated a significant church-going membership. Furthermore, the vast majority of Kalispels and Flatheads claimed Catholic identity, and at least, in the words of the missionaries "adhered to the principles of Catholic life." In the span of less than a century, it appeared, the Flathead Reservation had established itself, not only as the oldest Catholic community in Western Montana, but among the most diverse and vibrant in the whole of the Helena Diocese.³⁵

While never as visually spectacular as the Flathead Reservation, the communities that Catholics carved out on the Blackfeet and Nez Perce reservations were nonetheless impressive and sprawling. On the Blackfeet Reservation a church-going community, several hundred strong, lived in close proximity to Holy Family Mission and to Browning. On the more remote western edge of the reservation, which abutted Glacier National Park, existed more syncretistic communities that interspersed Catholic identities with "pagan" practices that Fr. Ignatius Dumbeck, the mission superior, and other missionaries seemed loathe to embrace. Yet, Blackfeet individuals, themselves, appeared far more comfortable with a mixing of practices that they found to be unproblematic, as evidenced by the "conversion" of a Piegan medicine man, Tom Horn, by Father Dumbeck in 1932.

On the Fourth of July, Horn's village, near East Glacier, traditionally conducted a "Sun Worship" ceremony, which the priests considered to be "pagan," and averse to Catholic practice. The ceremony consisted of the construction of a Medicine Lodge, a circular, thatched, building built of cottonwood boughs tied together with leather strips. Then, a medicine woman entered the lodge for three days of secluded prayer and meditation. When she emerged from the lodge, she was brought into a dance conducted by

³⁵ Fr. L. Taelman, S.J., "Indian Jubilee and Indian Missionary Golden Anniversary of Fr. L. Taelman, S.J.," August 31, 1935, St. Ignatius Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

a male “Master of Ceremonies.” Strained by the dance and exposure to the midsummer Montana sun, in July, 1932, Horn - the Master of Ceremonies - took ill. Feeling his time was at hand, Horn sent a messenger to Holy Family requesting that a priest be sent to hear his confession and give him blessing. Fr. Dumbeck answered the call:

...I sent word that if he wanted the priest, he must give up all his pagan practices and urge all his followers to do the same. But Tom and his whole village stolidly refused. However, a week later the grace of God had worked a change and he sent word for me to call... I lost no time in doing so. After answering all his questions and bringing out the reasons why all this is so displeasing to God, he asked me to return the following Sunday and hear his Confession. ...At the appointed time, he made a good Confession, and received the Last Sacraments with fervor. Owing to the long distances, bad roads and difficulty of sending and receiving messages, we always give the Last Blessing when there is any danger of death. Upon receiving this, he seemed very happy and the entire village seemed quite pleased.³⁶

Evidence indicates Horn likely had prior encounters with Catholicism, Catholic theology, and likely had even been baptized. Dumbeck indicates that, indeed, Piegiens who identified as Catholics lived in the village and throughout the “mountain region” of the reservation. Though it was difficult to get regular priests among the people living on the most far-flung pieces of the reservation, people still attended the masses that were offered, and by all indications wove together Catholic thought and practice with their own. Furthermore, as Dumbeck indicated, these syncretistic Piegan communities both welcomed and cherished the presence of Catholic priests to comfort and minister to the sick and dying, and had

³⁶ Fr. Dumbeck, “A Consoling Conversion,” October 24, 1932, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 207, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

undoubtedly made elements of Catholic faith an essential part of their own spiritual worlds.³⁷

Of course, the missionaries on the Blackfeet Reservation had successfully created more “orthodox” religious communities as well. Among the largest of these was a satellite mission established at Heart Butte, which Holy Family claimed held a community of about 700 Catholics.³⁸ Adapting to the extremes of distance on the reservation, and the far flung nature of the Catholic community, Holy Family acquired a portable “Mass kit” which could be transported in the mission’s Ford truck to say masses hosted by Catholic families across the reservation. Such endeavors could be difficult and arduous, but kept the mission in good standing with rural Catholics, as evidenced by a trip taken by Father Robert Kane, S.J., to Birch Creek in 1933. On November 5, 1933, Fr. Kane departed the mission to say a mass in the home of an elder Piegan woman - identified as Mrs. Kuka - who was one of earlier members of Fr. Rappagliossi’s congregation at the Ulm Creek Mission, and who regularly hosted masses for Catholics allotted or living on Birch Creek. With a blizzard having snowed in the mission several days before, Fr. Kane was accompanied by two Catholic Piegan men, who would assist him, should he run into any trouble on his “frontier mass” duties. Along the way Kane and the Piegan men had to dig the old Ford out of a snow drift, and replace a broken tire. They arrived at Mrs. Kuka’s, nonetheless, where they were warmly received by a congregation of about two dozen people. Fr. Kane said mass in the living room, and received confessions. Afterward, Mrs. Kuka hosted a brunch, gathered

³⁷ Fr. Dumbeck, “A Consoling Conversion,” October 24, 1932, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 207, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

³⁸ Letter: Fr. Joseph A Hannan to Mons. William Hughes, January 25, 1934, Heart Butte, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

together by members of the congregation as a token of their appreciation, and closed with a prayer for the Father's safety on his arduous journey back to Holy Family.³⁹

Even St. Joseph's on the Nez Perce Reservation, which for so long had to combat an entrenched anti-Catholicism that emanated from the agency under superintendents like Joseph Monteith, had by the inauguration of the Indian New Deal expanded the relatively insular Catholic community on the reservation. Interestingly, Catholic missionaries and Nez Perces appeared to bond in their reverence and lamentation for the tragedies of the Nez Perce War, which saw the nation, bands, and even families, torn apart between "treaty" and "non-treaty" Indians. The war, furthermore, ended in the banishment of some to Kansas, and to the Indian Territory, and even those who were allowed to return to Idaho often remained the targets of aspersions and mistrust on the part of the Indian agency. Among the most intriguing elements of this cross-cultural memorialization of the war, was the reverence given to Chief Joseph, who in his time had been an ardent traditionalist and non-Catholic, as evidenced by Nez Perce missionary, Sister Mary St. John's history of the "Conversion of the Nez Perce." In her own recollections, which often echoed the words of Fr. Cataldo, penned decades earlier, she cast Joseph as the reluctant diplomat, dragged to tragedy and war by "hot-headed young warriors."⁴⁰ In essence, Joseph became cast as a martyr, and a symbolic sacrifice for the blunders of the "Non-Treaty" Nez Perces that lead to hostility and war, and for the United States' injustices and faithless breaking of treaties.⁴¹

³⁹ Letter: Fr. Robert Kane, S.J., to Mons. William Hughes, November 14, 1933, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 215, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

⁴⁰ Sister Mary St. John, "The Conversion of the Nez Perces," 1937, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

⁴¹ Sister Mary St. John, "The Conversion of the Nez Perces," 1937, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

This veneration and memorialization of the past, served, in a profound way, as a folk history and a “myth of origins,” binding Catholics and Nez Perces together into a common history, with a common narrative, of persecution and injustice. As the story goes, the Nez Perces were first introduced to the precepts of the Catholic faith by French traders, and some were baptized and even converted. From that time forward they were eager to - like their friends the Flatheads - have a “black robe” sent to live amongst them. This request, however, would be denied to them by a hostile and unjust Indian agency that worked tirelessly to keep Catholics from having access to the reservation. Even once Fr. Cataldo had made it on to the reservation - just before the Nez Perce War - and fatefully met Chief Slickpoo, converting his band and founding St. Joseph’s Mission, Catholics remained pariahs and objects of persecution. The agency did whatever it could to interrupt the work of the mission, and it went out of its way to unfairly mistreat Catholic Nez Perces. Nonetheless, Catholics persisted, growing in strength and fervor despite their trials.⁴²

To a lesser extent, a veneration among Catholics on the Nez Perce Reservation for Fr. Joseph Cataldo, S.J., also bound the community together. Cataldo died Easter Monday, April 9, 1928, passing in a hospital bed in Pendleton, Oregon. He was 92 years old at the time of his death, and had been a missionary for the Native Peoples of Idaho and Oregon - including the Coeur d’Alenes, Nez Perces, and Umatillas - for a period of over 60 years. Cataldo was taken to be interred in Spokane, honored and followed by a procession of Nez Perces and Umatillas. His body was also honored in absentia at memorial masses held at

⁴² Sister Mary St. John, “The Conversion of the Nez Perces,” 1937, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

St. Joseph's Mission and St. Andrew's Mission on the Umatilla Reservation.⁴³ Annual observance of the anniversary of Cataldo's death, furthermore, became a trend that continued on into the 30s and well into the Indian New Deal era. In fact, it became a virtual feast day for Nez Perce Catholics. The community left behind by Cataldo in the 1930s, which he had been principally responsible for building, consisted of about 70 regular church going families mostly centered around Slickpoo, Lapwai, and Cul de Sac, Idaho. Making the community more centralized than on the other reservations. Furthermore, the mission held responsibility for 80 orphans boarded with the Sisters of St. Joseph's, and an additional population of about 140 boarded students in a girls and boys school.⁴⁴

Catholic success in carving out a place of significance in reservation life, however, coincided with a continued decline in their ability to self-support their operations. Catholics had already been wracked with the financial hardships brought on by allotment and the Great Depression. The impoverishment of the Catholic laity located on the reservations made it increasingly difficult for Catholics to generate sufficient revenue solely from within their own ranks. Survival required diplomacy, and required working out arrangements with tribal councils that were newly empowered by the Indian New Deal, and therefore - from a Catholic standpoint - entirely unpredictable, or by working with government officials, with whom Catholics possessed a mixed-at-best relationship with, going back to the very origins of the reservations.

⁴³ Sister Mary St. John, "The Conversion of the Nez Percés," 1937, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

⁴⁴ Letter: A. S. Willebrand, S.J., to Fr. J.B. Tenny, September 29, 1936, Slickpoo, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 5, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: A.S. Willebrand, S.J., to Fr. J.B. Tenny, November 9, 1936, Cul de Sac, Idaho, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 5, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

Catholics still relied, somewhat too, on the generosity of outside strangers to help with the petty expenses of their day-to-day operations. While publications like the *Indian Sentinel* and organizations like the Society for the Preservation of Faith among Indian Children never generated significant amounts of revenue, they nonetheless succeeded bringing the realities of Catholic life and Indian life on the reservations to the broader scope of the American Catholic Public, one vignette or story at time. Often times such stories could compel people to give what they could to help continue Catholic work. While such donations rarely ever amounted to more than paltry sums of \$10-\$20, in mass they could help cover a wide amount of the small, day-to-day costs that Catholic mission work entailed. They, furthermore, raised a gathering sense of collective, nation-wide effort and consciousness. Catholics across the United States, and especially in the major urban centers of the Midwest and the Atlantic Seaboard who held an interest, whether academic or evangelical, in Indian life in the American West, could - through publications like the *Indian Sentinel* - key into a sense of solidarity with the missionaries and with Native Peoples. Furthermore their gifts bought them a sense of collaboration and connection to people who geographically, socially, and culturally lived a world away.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Littered through the correspondence of the missions are thank you notes and other greetings sent to numerous donors, most often subscribers of the *Indian Sentinel*, who sent small contributions to assist with the petty costs of manning the Indian Missions. "St. Ignatius Mission, 1934," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "St. Ignatius Mission, 1935," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "St. Ignatius Mission, 1936," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 11, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "St. Joseph's Mission, 1934," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 2, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "St. Joseph's Mission, 1935," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 3, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "St. Joseph's Mission, 1936," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 234, Folder 5, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "Holy Family Mission, 1934," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 8, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. "Holy Family Mission, 1935," Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 9, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

On the Blackfeet Reservation, the tribal council and, informally, the government, took on a substantial burden of cost and resources to help keep the Holy Family Mission afloat. Their aid, counterbalanced a decline in Katharine Drexel's ability to finance the Catholic Missions. It also represented a major triumph, on the part of Fr. Dumbeck, to sell the importance of the mission to the agency and to the tribal council in Browning. He convinced both that Catholics provided an invaluable presence to the tribe and the reservation as a whole. The mission's, importance, at least from Catholics' point of view, came to be underscored in 1934, after the closing of the Indian Service Boarding School in Browning, making Holy Family the only institution on the reservation that could shelter and care for orphans, and the only school that could board children from families who wanted access to education, but lived in the remote reaches of the reserve, far from access to the day schools.⁴⁶

Government support, as had always been the prior precedent throughout the region, came by back-channeled and informal means. Collier's administration in the Indian Service, as whole, appeared to generally take on a sympathetic and friendly disposition toward Catholic Missionaries, even as the rhetoric of traditional native religious freedom ruffled feathers in some quarters. With the government boarding school, 7 miles north of Browning, closing at the beginning of 1934, the Indian Service decided to turn over the then-empty structures to the Blackfeet Tribe, effective June 30, 1934. Fr. Halligan, attached to Holy Family Mission, but assigned as the priest to Browning and its outlying districts,

⁴⁶ In correspondence between Dumbeck and the BCIM from the summer of 1935, he discusses his dismay with the BCIM's declining ability to draw upon Drexel's estate, and the necessity of making the mission's contributions clear to the both the government and the tribe alike. Letter: Fr. Dumbeck, S.J. to Mons. William Hughes, June 14, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. The Closing of the Blackfeet Reservation Boarding Schools, Letter: Fr. Dumbeck, S.J., to Mons. William Hughes, February 13, 1934, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

contacted Fr. Dumbeck, suggesting that through the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Holy Family could propose to take charge of the school and remove its operations to the government's buildings and physical plant.⁴⁷

Such a plan held clear advantages for Catholics. As of 1934, consistent budget shortfalls had caused Holy Family Boarding School's heating system and plant to fall into disrepair, and become wholly unreliable. This was a flaw that made conditions miserable for students and missionaries alike, as winter conditions in the late 20s and early 30s on the windswept grasslands of Northern Montana's mountain front frequently fell below zero degrees. The abandoned school, on the other hand, had been recently refurbished and reoutfitted by the Indian Service with a plant that was capable of a large power output, and with new heating ducts placed throughout the building. Catholic need for the new structure heightened in early June, with the government structure due to be turned over to the tribe, when a hail storm ravaged Holy Family, damaging many of the buildings, destroying the missions' crops, and disrupting the mission's ability to operate "far beyond the ability of the Diocese [of Helena] to solve immediately."⁴⁸

Simply turning the campus over to Holy Family, however, was a politically untenable, and an "open-and-shut" establishment clause suit should anybody have objected to such a turnover. Nonetheless Blackfeet Superintendent Warren O'Hara remained open to help Holy Family, in whatever way he could, meaning that if the school could not be

⁴⁷ Letter: Fr. Dumbeck, S.J., to Mons. William Hughes, February 13, 1934, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: John Collier to Harold Ickes, March 7, 1934, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

⁴⁸ Letter: Bishop Ralph L. Hayes to Mons. William Hughes, June 18, 1934, Helena, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Fr. Robert L. Kane, S.J., to Mother Mary Anastasia, S.H.J.C., June 22, 1934, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 222, Folder 6, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

reopened, then he was amenable to allowing Catholics salvage necessary parts from the abandoned structures to replace Holy Family's heating ducts, and encouraged the tribal council to direct funds to help repair damage at the mission. As 1935 passed, with no sign of the government school reopening, Holy Family received spare parts from the old boarding school, and received resources to repair the mission from a combination of tribal funds and money scrounged together from begging drives. The derelict boarding school was finally repurposed as a winter shelter for Blackfeet families who lived in the mountainous and remote quarters of the western arm of the reserve, and finally opened up in that capacity in 1938.⁴⁹

The troubles at Holy Family also coincided with the "coming-on-line" of the Blackfeet Reservations new tribal government and charter, and, in 1936, the tribal government moved to aid Holy Family - again in the face of much consternation over what the empowerment of tribal organizations would entail. On August 1, the tribal council under leadership of its President, Joseph W. Brown, easily motioned through a resolution appropriating \$2,500 in aid - a sum that equaled the decline in contributions from Drexel's estate and other Catholic monies over the previous decade - in a contract to be paid out - retroactively - for the fiscal year from July 1, 1936 to June 30, 1937. The following year, the council, at the mission's request again voted to extend the contract through the fiscal year ending June 30, 1938. In addition, the council agreed to an additional rate of

⁴⁹ Letter: Fr. Dumbeck, S.J., to Fr. J.B. Tenny, S.J., July 11, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Memorandum: Fr. Dumbeck, S.J., to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, July 13, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Fr. J.B. Tenny, S.J. to Fr. Dumbeck, S.J., July 16, 1935, Washington, D.C., Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI. Letter: Fr. Robert L. Kane, S.J., to Fr. J.B. Tenny, S.J., November 9, 1935, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1-1, Box 228, Folder 7, Marquette University Special Collections, Milwaukee, WI.

compensation, set at \$125 per child for 60 orphans placed within the care of Holy Family, for the purpose of repairs and maintenance at Holy Family Mission.⁵⁰

An increased culture of cooperation between church and government also characterized events on the Flathead and Nez Perce Reservations as well. Already by the late 1920s, St. Joseph's mission had been given access to the Catholic Children who were boarded within the sanatorium at Lapwai, and the mission permanently assigned Catholic sisters to help care for, and even educate, Catholics at the institution. Furthermore, as reorganization started to take hold, Catholics on both reservations gained greater access to the public schools where an increasingly large number of native children were being placed. Indian Service circulars, further clarifying the office's policy on spiritual practices, declared that Catholics could not be denied access to government institutions where they were wanted or requested. As far as the matter of children were concerned, if permissions were gained from native parents, then the Catholic missionaries were to be allowed to utilize public school rooms for the purposes of religious education. The one limit placed upon missionaries was that they could not compel attendance.⁵¹

One of the ironies of the expansion of the public school infrastructure on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations was that it actually expanded the amount of access that missionaries had to confirmed and would-be reservation Catholics, past a

⁵⁰ "Resolution of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council of August 1, 1936," Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 73, Folder 806.3 - Catholic Mission, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, Letter: Paul L. Fickinger to Charles L. Graves, June 12, 1937, Browning, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 73, Folder 806.3 - Catholic Mission, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, Letter: Fr. J.B. Tenny, S.J., to Charles L. Graves, April 6, 1937, Holy Family Mission, Montana, Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-133, Box 73, Folder 806.3 - Catholic Mission, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

⁵¹ "Catholic Mission," Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 80, Folder 803.6, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO. Also, "Jesuit Fathers' School," Records Group 75, Accession 8NS-075-96-328, Box 73, Folder 800, National Archives and Records Administration, Broomfield, CO.

point that any of the missions had ever previously possessed. Catholic missionaries had been all but exclusively barred from the Indian Service schools in the earlier phases of all of the reservations' histories. With the Indian Service's education division fading on the three reservations, however, and with an increased reliance on the boarding capabilities of the missions and the state public school infrastructure, to go along with an Indian Service that now seemed committed to maintaining a peaceful detente with the missions, Catholics expanded the scope of their religious instruction on the reservations, even as the financial support for Catholics' own infrastructure crumbled.

A combination of tacit government support and tribal intervention kept the missions afloat and alive during some of the most lean and deepest years of the Great Depression. Even then, though, very little could be done could be done to entirely curtail the crumbling scope of the mission drive, not only in the Northwest, but across the United States. Shifting interest, and a broadening commitment on the part of the Catholic Church to mission work outside of Indian Country contributed to a shrinking pool of both funding and manpower. Even before the Indian New Deal, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions' declining ability to support St. Joseph's, Holy Family, and St. Ignatius, made their shrinking and possible disappearance seem all but a certainty.

Yet, the decline the missions had no relation to the empowerment of tribal organizations, and the theoretical authority vested in them deny resources to the Catholic missions. The missions' decay instead was clearly seated in a vortex of outside influences that could not possibly be curbed. Indian and OIA actions, alongside the spread of the Catholic communities situated on the reservations, indicated a clear consensus and will to keep the missions open and functioning, if possible. By the time that the Indian New Deal

had been fully implemented, Catholicism had become an “organic” feature of the three reservations’ communities and cultures, in the sense that firm majorities within the tribes and their leadership did not question the faith’s or its institutions presence among them. The Catholic Church on the three reservations had developed and changed right alongside tribal groups that were, themselves, adapting, changing, and reforming. The two evolved convergently, as Catholicism or at least Catholic identity became a significant feature of the communities emerging in the 1930s. By the time of the Indian New Deal, Native Peoples and Catholics resided together in shared space to such an extent that the presence of Catholic images, practices, and forms across the reservations were a common and easily visible feature.⁵²

An Indian New Deal in the Northwest?

Rather than engendering a push for upheaving reform and a rollback of the policies of the allotment era, in the Northwest the Indian New Deal represented - more than anything else - a ratification and institutionalization of an order and status quo already taking shape in Indian Country. Reorganization amounted to a reaction to the administrative, legal, and cultural needs of complex reservation communities. The Indian New Deal in the region possessed no clear emphasis or direction, but was instead multifaceted, full of compromise, contradiction, and even experimentation, every bit as much a mixture of concepts and ideas as the checkerboarded reservations it governed. It was neither a full-fledged rejection of the assimilation and acculturation drives of the 1880s

⁵² The decline in mission schools certainly shared many similarities to the decline of the Indian Boarding Schools more generally, coinciding with a decreased will to continue onward with the program, and the expedience of more broadly using public schooling systems. Specifically for Catholics, increased commitment to urban missions and organizations like the Black and Indian Missions Organization (BIMO) spread funds further and thinner. See, John Reyner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 112-167.

through 1920s nor a forceful commitment to tribal sovereignty. It was - if anything else - a recognition of a status quo, nearly one hundred years in the making, that could not be undone by an act of congress.

In this way then, the Indian Reorganization Act, and the entirety of the Indian New Deal stood firmly within the precedent of a century of American Indian governance, directed as much by indecision and improvisation as by any guiding principle or ideology. It came no closer, furthermore, to establishing and settling the place of American Indians within the United States, its people, and its institutions, than anything that preceded it. “Indianness” remained entirely problematic for the vision of American development and history, even well into the birth of the Modern American West. The drive to assimilate Indians under allotment ended up in disaster, and as an utter failure when held against the intentions of its enactment. At its core the policy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had been meant to eradicate “tribalism” and replace it entirely with something else. What unfolded, instead, was a process by which “tribalism” evolved and syncretized with the influences that had sought to overpower it, including culture, law, and religion. This new “Indianness,” even its adapted forms, proved equally vexing to the United States. To what extent were these newly formed tribal nations meant to govern their own paths, and at what point did tribal sovereignty depart from American sovereignty?

Thus the power given to tribal institutions remained limited, and debate within the Department of the Interior raged on over the issue of how to resolve tribal sovereignty with American expansion. This uncertainty made the status quo, institutionalized in the Indian New Deal, extremely weak and fragile. As the Roosevelt era came to a close in the final days of World War II, so too did the delicate balance struck in Indian Country begin to

unravel. Rather than attempting to strengthening the compromises made in the later years of allotment and in the early years of the Indian New Deal, congress, and the federal government once more turned to a course of tribal destruction, attempting to legally terminate Indian recognition, and again, returning to the intent of the Dawes Act, to force Native Peoples to completely assimilate into the mainstream of American life. Thus, perhaps, the most remarkable facet of the Indian New Deal - setting it apart from the policies that preceded and followed it - was that for a space of about two decades, the policy attempted to work from a recognition that, perhaps, the United States and Indian Country were not necessarily anathema to one another, and could, indeed, coexist.

So too can the Indian New Deal also be firmly attached to broader legacy of Roosevelt's New Deal. It carried with it so many of the features of the other reforms that had been enacted as a response to the Great Depression. Its general rejection of ideological purity, and its embrace of improvisation and experimentation made it similar to most of the other major pieces of New Deal legislation, and made the New Deal era Office of Indian Affairs quite similar in its approach to dozens of other agencies, including the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Much like the New Deal, it also politically depended on a volatile coalition of people who did not always have united purposes, and yet could come to the terms of coexistence in the face of necessity.

Furthermore, the Indian New Deal and the New Deal as a whole both emanated from a fundamental shift taking place within the United States about the role of government. As much as the New Deal engendered a rejection of faith in "market forces" to improve people's lives, so too did the Indian New Deal represent a rejection of the ability of private property, enterprise, and market capitalism to finally and completely resolve the "Indian

Question.” Also, the Indian New Deal worked to stabilize the existing conditions of the reservations, not completely reshape them, in the same way that New Deal worked to save capitalism rather than overthrow it. The whole scenario was textbook Barton Bernstein, “the conservative achievements of liberal reform.”⁵³ The character and the shape of the New Deal in Indian Country was in many ways congruent to the trends found across the entire United States through the 1930s.

The era of reorganization became a brief and glimmering moment in the history of the Northwest and of United States Indian relations more generally. In and of itself, it ultimately never amounted to either a denouement to the federal assault on tribal integrity or the dawn of tribal sovereignty. As a policy, reorganization’s tenure was extremely short-lived. Already, by the closing months of 1945, the Indian New Deal and its broader intentions, which included the creation of claims division to return long-lost pieces of tribal property from the public domain was unraveling. A report released by the Hoover Commission in 1949 again brought the concept of “mainstream assimilation” back into the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ lexicon. A following House Committee Report, issued in 1952, during the closing days of the Truman Administration, put even more weight and force behind this. Consisting of an internal audit of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the committee report declared, on the basis of its findings, that the legal termination of tribal statuses would effectively eliminate waste within the bureau and streamline costs and budgets within the Department of the Interior. Such sentiment carried massive political currency in

⁵³ Barton Bernstein, *The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970).

the political climate of the early Cold War and the build-up of Department of Defense spending.⁵⁴

Thus, the Indian New Deal became a victim of a combination of some of the conservative pull back of the 1950s that assaulted the New Deal more generally. A generation removed from allotment, however, it also fell victim to forgetfulness, and a general ignorance of the conditions in which reorganization had been received and implemented. Of course, the Indian New Deal had never in the first place been proposed as a permanent solution. In its very conceptualization the IRA and other reforms had been meant as a temporary or emergency measure, to relieve the pressures of allotment, and extend the period in which tribal bodies could adapt to living within the structures of the wider United States. While it had never been intended for the Indian New Deal to come apart so drastically and so quickly, the threat of renewed bouts of forced “detrribalization” hung always like a cloud over the tribal governments and the reservations.⁵⁵

Yet, looking past a pure evaluation of policy, in Flathead, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce countries, reorganization represented both a culmination and a new beginning. Reorganization and the decades leading up to it amounted to a closing of the period of contact and conquest, and bore forth the results of the processes and forces that these experiences unleashed. Reorganization began to try and make sense of the shattered bits and pieces of culture and history resulting from the moment that the worlds of the Flatheads, Blackfeet, Nez Percés, and the United States collided in 1855. The 1930s were decidedly governed by a collaborative and shared cognizance that everyone living in the

⁵⁴ See, Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

⁵⁵ Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1980), 139-150.

bounds of Indian Country stood on a new terrain. It no longer necessarily contained the adversarial tones of confinement, but was supremely focused on the challenges of living together in shared space. Indian Country was no longer a place where “other people” lived, but a diverse and sometimes contentious geography to which a vast array of people and interests were tied.

In this sense, the era of reorganization, and the decades preceding it, marked the birth of the modern Indian reservation, modern Indian Country, and the modern tribes as we now know and recognize them. The tribes existed as unique and profound amalgamations of countless intertwining histories. They maintained their grounding, and their sense of selves, in the histories, cultures, and societies of the kin groups and cultures that had first negotiated the creation of the reservations in the 1850s. They also contained within them, however, inflections of the Catholic identities introduced by Jesuits from the 1850s through the 1870s, and inflections of other Christian identities introduced by Methodists, Presbyterians, and other missionaries. Wrapped within this as well existed the histories and identities of migrants and settlers, people from non-native backgrounds who through marriage and other conventions wove their personal identities and histories together with that of Indigenous Peoples. All of these influences existed together within the umbrella of an emerging tribal consciousness, which saw peoples such as the Confederated Salish and Kootenais, the Nez Perce Nation, and the Blackfeet Nation, recognize themselves as part of a cultural community that had never existed - in the same way - at any previous point.

Emerging forward from the era of reorganization were “nations,” with histories and cultures that combined new and old influences. This occurrence, which was brought

into reality by contact and other long term forces more than by any individual policy or event, marked the opening of the modern epoch of American Indian history, and the struggles, movements, triumphs, and tragedies that have defined the many American Indian experiences entering the twenty-first century. Much of that history has been defined by the effort to gain the sovereignty and self-determination that the Indian New Deal seemingly promised but never delivered. Nonetheless, by the end of the reorganization era in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle there stood three self-conscious and self-defined nations of people whose lives were bounded and intertwined with that of the American Nation, but who stood ready to assert their own path and identity, and define for themselves where that fit within the broader fabric of the United States and American History.

Epilogue:

The Makings of Modern Indian Country in Montana and Idaho

As Montana and Idaho passed through the New Deal and into the mid-twentieth century, the regional geographies in which the Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces lived looked radically different than they had nearly century earlier, when Isaac Stevens first commenced his expeditions of the Washington Territory in 1853. The Indian agencies were no longer remote outposts of federal power in a distended frontier. For that matter, the Catholic missions no longer stood as small outposts of their faith in the wilderness. The growing and expanding United States had surrounded and absorbed Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Countries. The reservations blended into the political boundaries of the states and their counties and municipalities. To a significant extent, power, economy, and population now stood outside the boundaries and jurisdictions of the confederated tribes whose ancestors once dominated the region. It pooled in the region's growing urban centers, at Missoula, Kalispell, Helena, Great Falls, and Lewiston.

Though not at the center of power, the reservations, and the confederated tribes that populated them, still – defiantly and improbably – stood enmeshed in the nation that Americans had built around them. They stood, more than anything else, as a monument to the failures of allotment and assimilation, and to the broken legacy of the Dawes Act, which had envisioned a future without tribes, and – indeed – without Indians. Allotment and assimilation, of course, did not pass without cost. The native peoples and cultures who negotiated its course were undeniable changed by the assault on their tribal identities. Owing to more than just their resilience, the communities on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and

Nez Perce Reservations weathered this storm and emerged onto carefully negotiated middle grounds.

This modern middle ground, however, possessed great differences from the negotiated shared spaces of the colonial period and nineteenth century frontiers that garner the attention of borderlands studies.¹ Rather than being propped up by bonds of commerce and diplomacy, the modern middle ground of Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle cut through every facet of daily life and existence. The human geography of the region itself represented a living middle ground. The communities on the three reservations were, at their core, heterogeneous institutions. Through intermarriage and migration the confederated nations absorbed thousands of former “outsiders” from Euroamerican and other indigenous origins. Leasing and other land use mechanisms introduced by allotment brought many more non-Indians onto the reservations and intimately tied them to Indian Country. By the time of reorganization there existed a community of non-Indian tenants who had shared Indian Country for multiple generations with the allotted and enrolled members of the reservation tribes.

Culturally and spiritually, too, the population of the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations was a living middle ground. Catholic identity and faith spun broadly through the region’s entire human geography. Native Catholics had, by the twentieth century, broadly woven the precepts and beliefs of Catholic theology and practice with patterns of native life. The region’s large Catholic festivals and celebrations of the 1930s

¹ Borderlands studies by Richard White, Pekka Hamalainen, and Brian Delay focus on the ability of powerful colonial and nineteenth century native confederacies to hold and command contested spaces in North America in the boundaries between competing European and North American empires and republics. See, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Also, Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). Also, Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

put on full display the syncretic nature of each reservation's Catholic culture and community. The most remarkable development that such occurrences signified was the emergence of new a theological and cultural framework – taking shape on each reservation – where the boundaries between “native” and “non-native” forms and expressions blurred and became more difficult to parse apart. Even more broadly than that, modern Indian Country in Montana and Idaho emerged as an ambiguous, complex, and diverse place, where “Indian” and “American” institutions and practices no longer held much discernable difference between them.

Writ-large, these monumental revolutions and changes signified profound truths about the status of modern Indian Country. No longer simply the place “where Indians lived,” it was the place where Native America and the United States ran together. And this held profound transformative ramifications for everyone who called Indian Country home. It became a multifaceted and dynamic world, one in which there were no frontiers, no beginnings, and no ends, but a seamless and unending pattern of change and growth. The few thousand square miles that comprised the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations were neither isolated backwaters, civilizational anomalies, nor a confined remnant of indigenous existence. Rather, they were the organic constructions of centuries of history, multitudes of peoples and cultures, and a synthesis of human inventions that spanned the scope of nations, continents, and the world.

Recovering Indian Country in the Modern Context

Any project that sets out to define “modern” Indian Country carries with it the implicit argument that it is a place that never ceased to exist, and – indeed – still exists. Indian Country is not a purely ethnohistorical term, meant to define an extinct geography

that exists only in the past, but rather an ongoing process meant to define the places where Indians lived and continue to live. Indian Country, itself, has been as dynamic and fluid as the people who inhabit it. Fundamentally, this study of the creation of the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations, their relationships to missionaries, and the passage of these places and people through allotment and into the era of reorganization examines a revolutionary and transformative epoch of Indian Country in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle. It was a process that altered these places and their populations into an almost unrecognizable form.

Indian Country in the region, however, only became unrecognizable because of the unprecedented scope and rapidity of the change. In the span of a century and a few generations native geographies were meshed and integrated with American geographies: the boundaries of territories, states, counties, and dioceses. In the prior century, dating back to the founding of the United States, Indian Country had always been defined as virtually synonymous to wilderness. Thus it was visually and conceptually obvious to pinpoint to where Indian Country existed. At the turn of the nineteenth century, it stood in the empty spaces of the United States' incomplete maps, beyond the scope of the Appalachians and the Ohio Valley, in the unknown wilderness of the North American interior, into which the Corps of Discovery ventured in 1804. It then existed beyond the Mississippi River – the destination of the Age of Jackson's removals – where the railroad systems and territorial boundaries ended. Finally, it existed between the transcontinental lines and trails, in the spaces where the United States had yet to solidify its claims.

In the twentieth century, Indian Country remained visible on the maps that laid out the boundaries of the reservations, but on the ground a century of missionary activity,

allotment, and assimilation rendered Indian Country difficult to detect. The stark physical boundaries – places where the rail lines ended, or where organized governments no longer held jurisdiction – no longer stood in place. Yet, despite the aspirations of allotment and assimilation, Indian Country remained in a different form. Subtle and almost unnoticeable. The assault on indigenous lifeways, launched in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, produced only an illusion of Indian Country's disappearance, not a reality.

Thus, even for people living in Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, Indian Country evolved into an almost hidden civilization, a place nestled amongst the rail lines and roads that link the region's seemingly indistinct little towns. The only things that still demarcated Indian Country in the twentieth century were notions of its poverty and economic and social turmoil (which are deeply interrelated forces). And, indeed, while allotment and the Indian New Deal physically and legally integrated Indian Country into the fabric of American infrastructure, politics, and governance, by the mid-twentieth century, it still stood largely outside the broader economic transformations of the early-twentieth-century United States, and the reforms that widened the scope of the country's prosperity to previously unattained heights.

In many ways, however, these developments provided the *mise en scène* for the most recent, and ongoing, epoch of Native American history: characterized by the American Indian Movement, Red Power, and the political battle for tribal sovereignty and rights. Fundamentally, then, the history of allotment and reorganization on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations – and elsewhere – provides a link and transition between the pre-reservation histories of independent cultural groups that dotted North America's landscape and twentieth-century organization of a culture-spanning American

Indian movement. The period of confinement, allotment, and reorganization provides the essential lynchpin linking together the continent's native past and present.

Adaptation and ethnogenesis underscore this entire history. The peoples living on the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce Reservations – and elsewhere – shaped and reshaped their communities and identities. They coalesced – from the multitudes of bands and kin groups encountered by Isaac Stevens – into the confederated reservation tribes. The reservation Blackfeet formed from bands and family groupings of Piegans, Kainais, Siksikas, and other related groups including the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines. The reservation Nez Perce coalesced from the broad divisions that existed within their culture in the pre-reservation period and from related Cayuses and Walla Wallas. The Confederated Salish and Kootenais came together from a constellation of Kootenai groups and mass sub-divisions within Salish culture, including Flatheads, Coeur d'Alenes, Upper and Lower Kalispels, and other Salishan peoples. Migrants from other indigenous cultures also filtered into these communities and integrated themselves into an emerging sense of tribal consciousness, so too did the mixed-ancestry descendants of intermarriages.

While the links to the past remained unbroken, the reorganization era also launched the reservation tribes onto new terrain. Thus, reorganization meant more than an end to allotment. It began to put in place political and social structures representative of the new tribal identities coalescing in the middle of the twentieth century. It placed native people into broader and more heterogeneous political, economic, and social structures at the same time that concepts of tribal identity and belonging were simultaneously expanding in heterogeneity. In a very real sense, the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Nez Perce tribes, as we know and recognize them today, emerged in the 1930s from a long process of contact and

adaptation. Identity and belonging shifted from kin or band status to a mixture of influences that included indigenous conventions, but also elements of American government, capitalism, and Catholicism.

Important connections to deeper historical roots with pre-reservation peoples of course remained, and provided essential, core components of newly emerging identities. Despite the wide assault conducted on tribal languages in the Indian Service's school systems, native languages nonetheless survived, and eventually thrived as the Indian New Deal lifted many of the restrictions once placed upon the use and teaching of tribal languages. Surviving along with these were other facets of spoken culture, and most importantly, oral traditions of tribal history, origins, and cosmology that were blended with concepts introduced by Americans and Catholics, but not altogether lost. For the reservation Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation perhaps the most important surviving link to the past became the Walla Walla, Hellgate, and Lame Bull treaties negotiated in the summer and fall of 1855 by their ancestors, in council with Isaac Stevens.

The first middle ground of Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle opened by those negotiations closed in subsequent decades. A new Nez Perce treaty in 1863 sundered the reservation peoples there into "treaty" and "non-treaty" bands, and resulted in the Nez Perce War of 1877. The Indian Service failed to ever follow through on the promise to survey and protect the Bitterroot Valley reserve promised to Chief Victor of the Bitterroot Salish by Stevens at the Hellgate Council. This ultimately led to the secondary reserve's revocation and the removal of a defiant Charlot from the Bitterroot Salish's ancestral lands in 1891. Similarly, neglect from Fort Benton ultimately rendered the agreement struck at

the Lame Bull Council with the Piegans and others from the Blackfeet Confederacy inoperative. And as a result the frontiers of Blackfeet Country became a violent and tragic place in the late 1860s, culminating with the massacre of Heavy Runners' band in 1870. Nonetheless, the spirit of 1855 endured, and the commitments to coexistence made at the council circle that year eventually bore fruit. Ultimately, the syncretism, the diversity, and the dynamism that came to define the three reservation communities as they grew and evolved stood as a lasting monument to the efforts of headmen like Victor, Alexander, Eneas, Lame Bull, Low Horn, Little Dog, and Lawyer in striking a balance of peace with American newcomers.

As the three reservation nations moved through reorganization a ground swell of fervor for the defense of those treaty rights emerged. The collapse of the Indian New Deal following the end of World War II, and the subsequent inauguration of Termination and Relocation policies, intensified the demand for the treaties' recognition. In virtual unison the reservation Blackfeet, Flatheads, and Nez Perces forcefully argued that for a century they had lived according to the promises made by their former headman, and demanded that the United States live up to Stevens' commitments. At the same time, though, the movement for tribal sovereignty in the Northwest equally reflected the course of change and adaptation on the three reservations from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. At its core, the demand for tribal sovereignty sought the empowerment of tribal governments and councils that represented the newly emerging tribes, such as they existed.

D'Arcy McNickle, who rose in the twentieth century as one of the seminal and most public figures of Indian rights activism, perfectly embodied the emergence of this new, syncretic, tribal consciousness. McNickle was fundamentally a product of the

Northwest's middle ground. He was born at St. Ignatius, Montana, in 1904, and raised on the Flathead Reservation, where he attended the St. Ignatius Boarding School. McNickle was enrolled as a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation, yet his father – William McNickle – was an Irish Catholic who moved onto the reservation, and his mother – Philomene Parenteau – was a Métis who had migrated onto the reservation. During the Indian New Deal McNickle joined the Office of Indian Affairs, working as an administrator in the tribal relations branch, and after he left the government he became the director of the American Indian Development Center at the University of Colorado in 1952. Under McNickle's direction, the University of Colorado became the leading training ground for Indian rights activists. Summer programs, held in Boulder, gathered together exceptional native students from around the country, where they received a crash course in American Indian policy, native law, and tribal rights.²

McNickle was living symbol of the middle ground, and the connections between past and present. He and his family came from among the ranks of newcomers and migrants absorbed by Indian Country under the period of allotment and reorganization. His childhood and formative years placed him firmly in a dual context, raised simultaneously as a member of the Salish and Kootenai Nation and a “non-Indian.” His thought and temperament reflected a multitude of impulses and influences, reflecting the combined native, American, and Catholic contexts out of which he emerged. Yet he stood also as a forceful proponent of tribal rights, and an ardent defender of tribal culture, the Salish and Kootenai culture in which he was immersed and the myriad other complex reservation cultures that had formed around the country. He stood simultaneously as an advocate of

² See, Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). Also, Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

“traditional” culture, and the cultures newly emerging under the context of allotment, assimilation, and adaptation.³

McNickle and other activists and public figures like him existed as representatives of modern Indian Country. Their lives offer us a fascinating window into what was ultimately produced by contact, confinement, allotment, and the absorption of Indian Country into the broader fabric of the United States. While the confinement of native people and the assaults upon their culture produced suffering and hardship for tens of thousands of people, it produced a simultaneous and profoundly astounding cultural revolution. For everything that allotment and assimilation destroyed, against all odds, it also created new forms of indigenous identity, thought, and ambition. In Western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle the history of confinement and allotment became more a story of creation than of destruction.

Reconsidering the “Indian Metanarrative” and “Genocide”

In 2014, the University of Oklahoma released a second edition of Roger L. Nichols’ survey, *American Indians in U.S. History*. If we are to accept it as a reasonable representative of the present status of the field, then the overarching narrative of American Indian History remains, in large part, fundamentally declensionist. The story leads us through the “boil down” of once-independent cultures degraded through warfare, confinement, and cultural assault. In the twentieth century, then, the remnants of tribal identity rise from these ashes to attempt to reassert their efficacy. Even the nods to survival

³ Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D’Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

and continued resistance, and the emphasis given to adaptations and agency do not necessarily alter the decidedly downward path of this history.⁴

An even stronger declensionist tinge colors the proponents of indigenous genocide.⁵ The banner example would be David Stannard's *American Holocaust*, in which the author explicitly contends that the conquerors of North America drew from the same ideological pool as the perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust.⁶ Setting aside the out-of-context use of terms as decidedly modern and twentieth century as "genocide," and "Holocaust," (which it should be noted, is a proper noun and title for one, specific historical genocide) the argument is stood up against a straw man, composed of an alleged and general public ignorance and refusal of the violence of contact and conquest. It is the supposed denial of American Indian History's tragedies that thus both excuses and necessitates the terms of Stannard's argument. Whatever value, however, that the "genocide debate" adds in terms of shock and disgust over the tragedies and injustices of the past is undone by the violence it does to the central ethnohistorical project of recreating the Native North American Past: the recovery native agency in American History.

Whatever the platitudes made toward the topic of Indian agency, they quickly become hollow when the overall direction of the history still only allows a single pathway, the violent decline into marginalization. True historical actors have to be given the freedom to react in often unpredictable and never predetermined ways. What is more, the violence

⁴ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

⁵ Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). Also, George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993). Also, Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers, 2004). Also, David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993).

⁶ David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993).

done to Indian agency by declensionism equally hollows out the agency and complexity of other historical actors, including the “conquerors.” Such a schematic quickly falls into dichotomous depictions of history, cast in the mold of victims and perpetrators. Victims are capable of little more than innocence in the one historical role that is ultimately assigned to them, to the bare brunt of violence and darker impulses of human nature. Perpetrators are similarly two-dimensional, however, capable of little other than atrocities, and “redeemed” only slightly by moments of inactionable sympathy and pity. With great rapidity, the whole story becomes predictable without the contour and color that defines human existence.

The tragedies and injustices of North America’s native past - of course - cannot and should not be ignored or minimized. The pendulum, however, has perhaps gone too far in its cadence. That is the case, particularly, if we are to allow the inhumanity, the violence, the oppression, and the injustice blot out all of the other facets of the complex history between Indigenous Peoples and the colonizing settlers who arrived in the Western Hemisphere - and eventually with the United States. Genocide cannot exist in a context that lacked cohesive ideologies and organization, which was certainly the case in almost all of the history of this continent. The framing of indigenous history as “genocide” blinds us and eliminates from our view the contours of another, simultaneous, and ultimately more meaningful story: that of ethnogenesis, the positive creation of peoples and identities.

Placing modern Indian Country, and the numerous Indigenous Nations and identities that inhabit it within the framework of ethnogenesis offers us a freedom and flexibility that can never be gained from declension narratives. It holds within it, the capacity to recognize and contend with the tragedies of the past and to contend with the ideologies and actions that brought about the destruction of countless innocents and the

assault on their cultures. At the same time, however, it also truly redeems native agency and sets its boundaries beyond the relatively hollow alternative that is generally offered up - that of resistance and survival. This contention bears with it some ground-shaking ramifications for how all of North-American indigenous history is interpreted, but perhaps has the most radical consequences for the practice of modern Native American History.

Here, I refer you to the recently published work of Mark Edwin Miller, titled *Claiming Tribal Identity*.⁷ It contains within it, glimmers of where this - still, relatively small - field might, and - indeed, needs to - go. Covering the stories of Indigenous Peoples who long escaped recognition, Miller cuts to the very question of what it means to be Indigenous in the context of the twentieth century, as well as in our present time. At the same time, the work pays credence to the politics of “established” tribes with older forms of federal recognition who tended to not always greet their newly recognized neighbors happily. Yet, while “established,” treaty tribes balked at the recognition of new peoples, both were profoundly modern cultural creations, both born of the consequences of contact.⁸

Miller’s insights offer a refreshing departure from older works in the field, which, still come from an essentially declensionist position. Titles such as Stephen Cornell’s *The Return of the Native* and Joane Nagel’s *American Indian Ethnic Renewal* focus greatly upon the gathering force of cultural revivalism and political efficacy that erupted from Indian Country in the twentieth century, on the heels of the era of reorganization.⁹ Even the

⁷ Mark Edwin Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgement* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

⁸ Mark Edwin Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgement* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

⁹ Stephen Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Also, Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

titles carry with them the implicit claim of a “rise from the ashes.” Cultures torn through centuries of injustice re-emerge once more to claim rights and powers long denied them.

A “rise from the ashes,” however, misses a larger and more important point. “Indianness,” recognition, and the Indigenous Nations all, and together, stood on newly opening terrain with the coming of reorganization. The groups demanding sovereignty as nations in the twentieth century and the groups that negotiated the flawed and sometimes outrightly unjust treaties were not the same groups of people, even if their names and titles bore semblances, and even if they carried with them important pieces of a past identity. That past, however, over the course of a century or more had become firmly bound together with new influences, new creations, and new cultures. It becomes quickly difficult to say that the Confederated Salish and Kootenais, the modern Blackfoot Nation, or the modern Nez Perce Nation (or any other recognized nation for that matter), as they emerged in the 1930s were entirely old, and historic constructions, compared to other indigenous groups who remained out in the woods, without federal recognition. For in many important, and meaningful ways, they themselves were - at least partially - new creations and new identities. That realization forces us to reframe the narrative. Rather than “rising from the ashes,” the groups of the reorganization era existed as communities, created by an ethnogenesis that cobbled together history, culture, tradition, and invention, where their push for political efficacy ran simultaneously to their gained sense of self.

This is, of course, not a call to scold claims to tradition. It is not the place for detached academic commentators to evaluate the meanings that modern tribal groups place in their connection to their cultural ancestors, and, indeed, those connections themselves are part of a broader historical context, part of which the author has tried to illuminate. It is

instead a push to see modern Indian Country in a new and informative light. It seeks to reorganize the interpretation of the past in a fashion that brings us closer to understanding how America's indigenous human landscape exists in the modern period and today.

Reservations, treaty lands, and agencies were not solely institutions of destruction, and they were not solely places where native cultures were placed to decline and die. Rather, despite the numerous and complicated intentions placed into them, and really, beyond the designs of the Indian Service and the federal government, the reservations and the agencies became places of creation and growth, where people found meaning in their trials, and reorganized not only the material terms of their existence, but the essential components of their world views, cultures, and societies. The history of American Indian relations in the Northwest, and indeed large portions of the overall narrative of Native American history needs to be reorganized from a tale of death and destruction to an analysis of conflict and tragedy that produced new life.

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